The BORGIAS

or

AT THE FEET OF VENUS

By

VICENTE - BLASCO - IBAÑEZ

THE BORGIAS
OR
AT THE FEET OF VENUS

The works of
VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

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The Pope of the Sea

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THE BORGIAS
OR
AT THE FEET OF VENUS

An Historical Novel
Sequel to THE POPE OF THE SEA

By
VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ
Author of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," etc.

VERSION FROM THE SPANISH
BY
ARTHUR LIVINGSTON

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PART ONE

AT THE FEET OF VENUS

AT THE FEET OF VENUS

CHAPTER I

The *Venusberg*

IT WAS the date line on a Paris newspaper, catching his eye as he stood glancing casually through his mail, that brought Claudio Borja back to a sense of realities.

Up to that moment he had been living as in a dream, free from bondages of time and tyrannies of space! Living, perhaps, it could not have been called: it was more like slipping down a gentle incline over a surface so smooth as to occasion not the slightest jar—each day as beautiful as the one before it, and the one that was to follow! Here, now, at the top of a newspaper, a day of the week and a day of the month, identical with another date which lay unforgettable in his memory. A year? And he had passed it in spellbound inertness, an absorption comparable only to the enchantments that fall upon people in an Arabian Night's Tale, and paralyse them in some fairyland by some magic conjuration!

Twelve months had gone by since that great event which marked a new epoch in his life much as certain decisive episodes mark the periods of History! Suddenly, unexpectedly, she had appeared before him there in that tumble-down castle of the Popes of Peñiscola, really without knowing why she had come, yielding, as she thought, to a capricious whim, but actually under the impulse of a passion which had not yet taken form in her mind and was struggling to find its words! Then—the storm! A storm which he had called—irreverently—"an act of Providence!" And it had driven them to refuge in the farm house of a poor widow who had taken them for man and wife!

That modest cottage he would never see again; yet it towered in his memory more glorious, more majestic, than any of the historic edifices he had admired on his tours! The name of that humble widow had quite faded from his mind; but it was she, nevertheless, who unwittingly had brought them together! Her image lingered in his memory illumined by that soft and tender glow which gratitude throws upon the benefactors of our pasts!

That night had changed the whole aspect of Claudio Borja's life. People, things, perhaps, were the same, but he—he was different! He had discovered, as those who are happy in love are certain to discover, that life has much more poetry than we ever imagine in days of discouragment. A bewitching charm seemed to permeate things which he had formerly called monotonous and commonplace. His back turned to the rest of the world, he had eyes only for Rosaura Salcedo de Pineda! Side by side they would traverse the whole pathway of their remaining existence—and they were young, both of them: the road opened out before them to no visible horizon!

Their first months together they spent in travel. Seeking a less rustic background for their happiness, they fled by railway from that paradise of orange groves which was to be so often in their thoughts. They stopped at Barcelona (to wait for the chauffeur, who was still working over the broken car at a garage in Castellón). Then they motored on into France (the Argentine widow seemed suddenly to have lost all interest in the beauties of the Spanish coast and in the romantic story of Pope Luna). Soon they found themselves in Marseilles again (but this time without the sudden and captious separations of those earlier visits). And at last Claudio was spending his afternoons in that hillside garden of the Blue Coast which connected Rosaura's villa with the cliffs of wave-beaten marble on the Mediterranean shore. There an entrancing solitude engulfed them for some days (in the end it began to pall upon the restless Rosaura). The summer months saw them in Biarritz, whence they passed to Alpine resorts in the Tyrol, and then to the seashore again in Venice.

To tell the truth, Claudio was scarcely aware of where they went or were. Seas, mountains, cities, rural landscapes he saw only as reflections in Rosaura's eyes; and his impressions of places were but reminiscences of things she may have said of them (modified by recollections of the repose or excitation of his own nerves). At certain times he felt as though it were music rather than air that he was taking into his lungs. The ground under his feet had a magic resilience. A leap into the air, and he could have floated there in defiance of all physical law! It was a dream-life, on some other planet! Sometimes on awakening from his sleep in the morning, he would look about his room and ask himself uneasily: "Is all this real? Is Rosaura truly mine? May I not have just dreamed so during the night, and now wake up to find it all an illusion?"

The ensuing struggle with these last uncertainties and anemias of slumber usually had the effect, through some mysterious working of his inner being, of humbling Claudio's pride of triumph to a painful sense of inferiority! He, loved by such a woman! A woman whom he had worshipped at first as a being of a higher species, never daring to imagine that she could so much as glance at him! But then his vanity would glow at the old twit about the "Chevalier Tannhäuser," which Rosaura from time to time revived. Yes—and she was Venus! And he was living at her feet, drunk with passion, like the reprobate knight in the legend! The garden of Rosaura's villa was indeed the *Venusberg,* that magic abode of carnal sin, of voluptuous poetry, which gave shivers of fright to the pious ascetics of old!

Rosaura, for her part, seemed quite satisfied with the outcome of an adventure which she had undertaken frivolously, without definite purpose, and with a haste that smacked of madness. Claudio's amorous infatuation humored her woman's vanity. From the very first he had made utter surrender of his whole will, adoring her like a goddess with a devotion that had a certain mystic abandonment—a goddess whom a mortal man obeys and never contradicts. Their relation was free from those little tiffs of jealousy which, in the end, had embittered her love for

the Doctor-General. Sometimes a wave of almost grateful tenderness would sweep over her, and she would say:

"How good you are to me, Claudio! That is why I love you, more than I have ever loved any man!"

After an autumn in Paris, winter had driven them again to the Blue Coast; and more months were added to the unreal life that Borja had been living. Rosaura's garden was not the *Venusberg:* it had no magic grottos with beds of coral and garlands of fantastic flowers, picked, as it were, from some meadow under the sea. But its thickets of rosebushes where blossoms were as numberless as leaves, its cosy esplanades with singing fountains, its intertwining bowers all whispering with the cooing of doves, its beach of blue pebbles washed to and fro between cliffs that looked like blocks of marble waiting for a sculptor, were witness to many tender conversations between the two lovers—passionate silences which broke into murmurs, destined in their turn to be smothered in kisses!

But shortly before that day when Borja became aware, with a start, that there was such a thing in the world as a newspaper with a vulgar date-line, this Edenlike existence began to undergo a change. Rosaura said to him on one occasion, solemnly, and with a certain prescience of danger in her tone:

"Aren't we thinking too much of each other? Shouldn't we go back to our old ways of living? We will still be lovers of course! But all this is too extreme! Exaggeration sooner or later palls—and that is the end!"

So the beautiful *Madame de Pinédà* began again to appear in the gaming halls at Monte Carlo, at gala dinners in the hotels, at afternoon dances in fashionable tea-rooms, ever attended by "her Spaniard," whom society accepted as her recognized escort without over-much concern as to the precise character of the relationship. Borja, for his part, believed her more securely his own now that she was returning to her former haunts and occupations—there was less danger of the satiety certain to follow on a protracted intimacy kept wholly apart from other people.

Before long, however, the young man's acceptance of everything was to be ruffled by little episodes incidental to a more active life. Rosaura had recovered her enthusiasm for dancing—an art in which Claudio could claim no real proficiency. In fact Rosaura confessed to him one day in half-nervous good humor that she never could dance at her best with him:

"You can do so many things, *Borjita*—that is why I admire you; but as for dancing—well, really, dancing is not where you shine!"

Irked, at bottom, by a form of amusement he would never have chosen, Claudio thereupon resigned himself to the rôle of a considerate husband, keeping to his seat while she danced with other men. When she came back to him he would smile with a forced submissiveness—what, after all, could he say to a woman who hastened to flatter him with ardent words that seemed to ask forgiveness? And, indeed, he had no real cause for complaint! Rosaura loved him as passionately as before, with the vehemence which beauties approaching the doubtful age lavish upon men younger than themselves. If sometimes she would seem to forget him in the thrill of a dance or in the excitement at a gaming table, he could detect no diminution whatever in her attachment for him afterwards.

His confidence in Rosaura's fidelity was so complete that he noted without a trace of jealousy the appearance on the Blue Coast of a man the bare mention of whose name had often disturbed his peace of mind during the first months of their relationship. He had met Urdaneta in Paris at a South American function which he had attended in Rosaura's company. The Doctor-General had obviously desired to make his acquaintance, bringing an introduction about through a common friend. Borja could not understand himself! This man he had always hated; but now, on finding himself in his actual presence, he had to admit that Urdaneta was not an unattractive fellow.

The Doctor-General had come to Cannes for a stay of some weeks, and the two lovers met him repeatedly in ballrooms at Nice or at the Casino at Monte Carlo. More stubborn in her

grudges than the Doctor-General, Rosaura treated him with a coldness calculated to prove to the most blind that the past was dead, very dead, and that in her eyes he was just one among many callers. Borja, on the other hand, could not evade the spell of the irresistible charmer. Though, still, any mention of Urdaneta's name stirred his jealousy, the man's presence was enough to quiet all his suspicions and even inspire in him a certain affectionate sympathy. Sometimes he would try to parry contemptuous references which Rosaura made to the great South American:

"Poor Urdaneta—he's a good fellow! Why so hard on him?"

The Doctor-General's day of glory was indeed waning—he was already the lion in decline, a survival as it were of his old self. There were still women who felt the strange allurement of his great curly beard, of his mien as a handsome beast of combat, of his reputation as a conqueror, of his overbearing aggressiveness as a male. But there was in all this a suggestion of fatigue which nothing could conceal. Urdaneta was frequently out of money—a situation hardly exceptional in his career as an indefatigable spendthrift, but now of more sinister import. He had always regarded blackmail of his country across the sea as a dependable source of revenue; but that mine was being worked out. It was no longer such a simple matter to land in South America, start a revolution, collect a supply of funds, and be off again to Paris. Urdaneta's little republic had followed the evolution of neighboring states and was less susceptible to "generals" and "doctors." Control of the nation had passed to younger men educated in the United States or in Europe. These new arrivals were developing industry and commerce in enterprises that benefited from peace.

"You had better not come!" Urdaneta's friends would write. "There has been a great change in conditions here. Your name is not quoted as high as it used to be. If you were to appear now, you might not find it comfortable."

For that matter, Urdaneta had scented the change in the wind even from his distant retreat in Paris; and he abandoned his old

policy of armed "interventions," understanding perfectly well that the word "discomfort" in the language of his country meant sunrise and a firing squad.

Faced with ever growing debts and the need of retrenchments —undebatable evidence, this, of waning prestige — Urdaneta could not make up his mind as to what he should turn to for the future. He was too shrewd in matters of the heart to try a reconquest of the rich Argentine widow. No, that book was closed! Rosaura would hardly come back to him so long as she had a younger man to depend on, a boy gentle in ways and words and completely submissive to her will. Youth has its value for any woman; but it would appeal especially to a woman from South America, a world so extremely new as to feel all the excitements of the primitive savage at anything with the flavor of Maytime! A sense of definite inferiority came over the Doctor-General in Borja's presence: though in the youthful Spaniard he saw a successor worthy of esteem; and quite despite himself he took a benevolent interest in the boy's prospects. Perhaps the vague something which drew Borja to Urdaneta was only a reflection of the latter's own state of mind—a feeling that expressed itself in his smile and in his affectionate manner toward Claudio. Borja would often study the friendly gaze with which Urdaneta looked upon him and strive to divine the meaning of that good-natured smile. Did the Doctor-General regard him as a future companion in misfortune? With a woman like Rosaura, a woman enamoured of life and fired with a truly pagan soul, what man could really feel sure of himself? "Beware of youth, my boy!" Urdaneta seemed to be saying. "Some day someone younger even than you will come along, and then—well, what you did to me!"

But for such possible condolences in the mind of the fallen hero, Borja would console himself in the arrogance of his own happiness. He, after all, was what he was, a being superior in intelligence, in cultivation, in taste, to this savage from across the ocean, who may have killed a hundred Indians over there, but could be little more than a joke in Paris, an environment de-

tached from the man's former history and unfavorable to the display of his real talents!

The only serious annoyances encountered by Borja in the blissful life he was leading came from that somewhat hybrid but always fashionable society which gathered for the winter season on the Blue Coast. This international, polyglot assemblage of well-dressed idlers, where notorious figures of newspaper scandals rubbed elbows with tourist millionaires, retired statesmen, aging ex-royalties, itinerant dukes and duchesses, and cocottes redeemed by lucky marriages, he had joined from no choice of his own, but as a concession to Rosaura's habits and predilections. Oftentimes, wearied of conversation with individuals who had nothing in common with him—conversations on the inevitable themes of money and love affairs, titles and distinguished pasts—he would ask himself:

"Why am I devoting my life to such insubstantial people?"

And the answer would be his love for Rosaura, which would condemn him to permanent citizenship in that world of frivolity, gossip and amorality. He was piqued to remark that all those people who received him with such cordial smiles really had no perception or understanding of his deeper self, but dismissed him from their minds as "the friend of *Madame de Pinédà*—an attractive young Spaniard of good family." At one moment, indeed, he found himself a "marquis"—*Marqués de Borja,* a title conferred upon him by certain elderly ladies who thought that all Spaniards in "good society" possessed more or less famous titles. Later on, from certain silences rather than from anything that was said, he divined another judgment which this motley world had formed in his regard. The widow from the Argentine was immensely wealthy, and he, perhaps, was her —her *gigolo!*

Not that there was anything wrong, or even questionable, about this, in the eyes of those open-minded people! Rather it improved his standing with certain of the ladies, lending him the fascination a rare gem might have, or any useless object that costs a lot of money! As a matter of fact, from the first days of

his friendship with Rosaura, he had resisted the logic of the great disproportion between their respective fortunes. "I am the man!" he would assert with pride, whenever Rosaura would try to pay for him; and though she carried the larger burden of her own luxurious living, the habit of extravagance could not fail to spread to him. Twelve months of association with an heiress had begun to shake the foundations of his inheritance. He had spent several times his income, drawing heavily upon his principal. He could see that in the long run he would find it economically impossible to linger in such a world—for the honor of figuring as the hired lover of a much-sought woman!

But what hurt him most keenly was his spiritual isolation, the absence of any intellectual contacts between him and Rosaura's friends. Of the numberless languages represented in her world (French was its common medium of exchange), Spanish was the only one missing. Only by rare exception would he meet a person who could stammer a few words in Castilian, as the result of some visit to Spain or South America. Rosaura tried to raise his prestige in that trivial environment by proclaiming him an author, "a great author": whereupon some other women (English), who added a hankering for romance to their homesickness for a youth long past, took sudden interest in him and begged for "copies of his novels." Surely these must have been translated into English or French! But alas! He had never written a novel, the only type of literary art that can survive translation! He had poems, poems in Spanish, prisoners, therefore, of their first form—to translate verse is to break a phial of perfume and see its subtle essence vanish in the air!

Unappreciated in this, his best and most intimate being, Claudio could think of himself, on the background of that world, merely as a bad dancer, a silent listener to inconsequential prattle, very inferior at best to countless young men who were the idols of the *dancings* because of their skill with their feet, or their idle conversation.

At a certain moment, all these suppressed motives of discontent seemed, through some secret and subconscious working of their

own, to find their outlet in a cruel desire to torment Rosaura. It was as though an element of affectionate combativeness had made its way into his love for her.

"You must have had many lovers!" he said to her one day. "Tell me about them—not that it makes any difference!"

It was useless for Rosaura to protest: Borja persisted incredulously. What—a woman so beautiful, and so interesting to men? And she had really come down to his time with no amorous history? Urdaneta he did not mention, overlooking that name for the very reason that the Doctor-General was really the only adornment of Rosaura's past. No, he must know about "the others," others whom he made more or less numerous according to the caprice of the moment, as though under some strange constraint to people the mysterious void of Rosaura's history with spectres of his own present unhappiness and hers.

Unable to deal with such obsessions by ordinary means, Rosaura on occasion would resort to her feminine wiles, inventing fantastic stories of men she had met on her travels, and embellishing them with details calculated to whet the silent fury of her lover. Then suddenly she would break into a laugh:

"But don't you understand, silly, that I am making fun of you? The wilder the better, since you must have it so!"

The stratagem would never have the desired effect. Borja would only begin to wonder just what truths must lie behind such inventions. One day he carried his prying jealousy to the point of deriding her because she had had no lovers, as though that were a reflection on her merits. This novel method of cross-examination at last brought a bitter rejoinder through her tears:

"I am beginning to understand you, Claudio! You are never, never satisfied with what you have! You are one of those people who simply must suffer, and complicate their own lives and the lives of those about them. You are one of those who can love only when they can also hate; though the real trouble with you, if you would have the truth, is that you are tiring of me!"

It was just when the excessive tranquillity, the excessive felicity,

of this manner of living was beginning to sour Claudio's disposition, that he received a letter which served to fire him with the excitement of something new: his uncle, don Baltasar Figueras, the Canon at Valencia, was on his way to Rome and would stop off at Nice to see him!

The purpose of the pious scholar's journey—so the letter announced—was to complete one of those historical studies which had already made him famous in Spain (among a half-dozen bookworms as erudite as he). This time it was a question of Valencian tiles, which had been used in the pavement of the so-called "Borgia Rooms" in the Vatican. The conscientious Canon had to have seen these with his own eyes and trodden them with his own feet, before he could "give to the world" a book he was writing on "Ancient Hispano-Moorish Tile-Makers of the village of Manises."

To be exact, the Canon had visited the Eternal City on two previous occasions, but as a member merely of popular pilgrimages to see the Pope. This time he would go alone—and not without "official support": his illustrious friend, don Aristides Bustamante, whom he had met years before through Claudio's father, was now living in Rome as Ambassador of His Catholic Majesty to the Holy See. Such a connection would afford him exceptional facilities for prosecuting the researches he had in mind. To be admitted to the Library of the Vatican in a virtually official guise seemed to the learned Canon the crowning triumph of his career as a historian.

The Canon's letter suddenly refreshed in Claudio's mind three figures which, during the twelve months past, had but rarely flitted across his memory as distant and hazy phantoms: Senator Bustamante, the sweet Stella, his daughter, and doña Natí, the Great Man's housekeeper and sister-in-law. Stella, in words that Claudio used to Rosaura, had become for him "like the faint perfume of a violet put to sleep between the pages of a favorite volume." And Rosaura, too, was reminded of something she had quite forgotten: don Aristides and his family had finally accepted her invitation to the Blue Coast, but at a time when she

was travelling far afield with Claudio, and had been unable to welcome them. Thereafter the new Ambassador had sent her various letters from Rome, describing in florid style the receptions he had been giving in his palace, and the honors which were being showered upon him. Would she not be so kind as to pay a visit to the Eternal City to participate in so much splendor? And then—silence, a silence stubbornly prolonged!

"They have found out about us!" she reflected. "And—what do I care!"

At the time the joys of her new-found love were filling her with a courage proof against any shock—and she dropped the pompous Senator and his family from her thoughts.

The Canon, so the letter continued, was eager to see his beloved nephew, and he would stop off at Nice for that purpose alone. The young rascal had announced a visit from Peñiscola a year before, and then suddenly had turned about and gone back to France! Now, however, they could have several days together; and he, the Canon, would have an opportunity for a real look at the famous Riviera, under the guidance of a connoisseur. Claudio, indeed, so he had heard—had become a "regular dandy" credited with adventures in "high life" which made him think of novels he had read—surreptitiously—while a student at the Seminary!

"But my studies will then call me to Rome," the letter concluded. "As you know, I have devoted my life to the noble cause of rehabilitating some of the great villains of History who have been too long the victims of gross slander. A long and arduous task—I dare say Death will overtake me before I reach the end! However you should be interested in what I am doing now because of the name you bear... In any event I must still spare a few of my precious days abroad for you.... I must have a glimpse of the company you are keeping! If I hear aright, what a charming and irresponsible scalawag you have grown up to be!"

CHAPTER II

The Canon's High Emprise

CLAUDIO saw in don Baltasar the same kindly and absent-minded individual who had been the guardian of his boyhood in the mansion on the Road of the Chevaliers in Valencia. At sixty, with some to spare, the Canon was still a lively, sturdy man, with shoulders erect, a complexion fresh and colorful, hair still luxuriant, its black successfully waging its battle with the gray. Only two changes of note were observable in his appearance. Under the strain of patient labors over time-faded manuscripts his eyes had weakened and sought the aid of oval-shaped glasses mounted in gold rims. And then—there was no doubt about it—Uncle Baltasar had thickened about the waist! He was as lean and wiry as he had ever been of yore, with not a trace of fat on his arms and legs. But his stomach had gone a way of its own, developing with a sort of comical independence. This was, perhaps, something to be expected in such a studious man, who sat for long hours in a library chair, his head resting on his hands, his eyes fixed on some illegible document before him. Besides, as Borja well remembered, the Valencian cuisine knew seven different recipes for cooking rice, not to mention other no less succulent dishes, to all of which the holy Canon was loyal, his greatest vice being a jovial and deliberate appetite which had learned to restrain itself just before encroaching on the boundaries of excess.

This journey to Rome, after so many placid years in the archives and libraries at Valencia, was something of a lark in the aging Canon's eyes. He had laid aside, for the time being, the silk cassock which his housekeepers at home always kept spotlessly neat for him (save for a faint odor of incense and a suggestion of snuff). He was now wearing, to his own almost

proud delight, an ordinary civilian suit of black with a stomacher of the same color. The left lapel of his coat showed a button, red and yellow.

"This button," he gravely explained to his nephew, "I have kept over from my second trip. It will prevent misunderstandings. Since these are the colors of the Spanish flag everyone will know that I am a Catholic priest. In these foreign countries you meet Protestant clergymen everywhere, and they wear clothes just like ours. I should not care to be mistaken for one of them."

Even in other respects the Canon was the same innocent and credulous person he had been as a student of theology at the Seminary. He had gone to a hotel in Nice recommended to him by some colleagues in the Valencian priesthood lately returned from Rome.

"A quiet, respectable establishment," he had explained, on Borja's suggestion of a more comfortable place, "belonging to believers. It would be hardly proper for a man of my calling to frequent the resorts of you young sinners. There are too many women in these towns, all with their arms bare, and their dresses cut down to here! And even in the churches you see them—even in the House of God!"

Despite such scandalized outbursts, Figueras was inclined by temperament rather to excuse than to censure the faults of others; and daily companionship in his historical studies with kings, queens, popes, and other notables, male and female, of sumptuous habits, had given him an instinctive sympathy for a luxury ever beyond his means, and an almost childish admiration for the wealthy and the powerful.

When Borja chanced to mention Señora de Pineda as a lady living in a fashionable residence on the Monte Carlo road, who had desired to make the Canon's acquaintance after all she had heard of him from Claudio, Figueras cleared his throat in a significant manner, to let it transpire that the lady in question was not unknown to him. In fact rumors of Borja's conduct during the past year had reached even the secluded vicarage in Valencia. But Don Baltasar was a good-natured, tolerant soul!

For one thing, a young fellow might do abroad things that would hardly be proper in Spain. In the second place, the lady's husband was dead and the boy himself was disengaged—no one was suffering any direct harm from this irregular conduct. The priest, finally, to quiet his own conscience for its inability to be aroused, elected to conceive the relationship as the prelude to a probable marriage.

In his own special literary way, the Canon Figueras was as much a man of the world as anybody. Without a peer in his knowledge of the historical gossip of his country, he was familiar in minute detail with the lives of the sovereigns of Aragon. What one of them had been without a mistress, the object of romantic passions coldly denied to legitimate queens? Alfonso the Fifth, conqueror of Naples, never took the trouble to pay a visit to his wife in Spain, but lived in Italy and died there a victim of his enthusiasms for Neapolitan marchionesses. As for Alfonso's brother, John the Second, father of Ferdinand the Catholic, the less said the better! John had passed his reign in an affair with a Jewess of rare beauty! Well documented as he was, furthermore, on the amorous sins of various Popes and Cardinals of the Fifteenth Century, don Baltasar was not the person to take alarm, like some timid saint, at the vagaries of two young people who were careful to preserve a due regard for appearances. One could wink an eye when sin had not yet led to scandal! And the good Canon did not shrink from entering the seaside garden which Claudio called the *Venusberg,* to admire its splendors of living green and to greet its amiable owner with chosen words of stilted and mellifluous courtesy.

"What a beauty she is!" he said to himself. "Prettier than they said, or than I ever dreamed! And how she can dress!"

At last he had finally seen in the flesh one of those gorgeous perfumed ladies of the rhythmic tread whom he had so often admired in his imagination in perusing the secret records of great men of the past, and whose ravishing bodies he had previously known only as dust and bones lying in forgotten tombs in the shadowy corners of Spanish cathedrals. In Rosaura in-

deed he was fain to note resemblances with the romantic mistresses of Spanish kings, and with Roman gentlewomen reputed to have led Popes astray. Later on he felt ashamed for such disrespectful comparisons. The counterfeit girlishness which Rosaura knew how to affect, her simple manners, the childlike curiosity with which she plied him with questions, quite disarmed this ingenuous man of books.

Thanks to Claudio's chatter in the past, Rosaura had formed a perfect estimate of don Baltasar. Interested as people are in the life stories of those they love, she had listened for hours at a time to Borja's reminiscences of his infancy, passed in the old book-stuffed mansion on one of the sleepiest streets of Valencia, where the learned Canon had spent forty years of his life. There was a musty smell about the rooms. Not a wall but was streaked by meandering cracks in the plaster. The floors shook alarmingly as one walked across a hall, and the passage of a cart along the street caused a rain of lime to fall from the ceilings. The *porte cochère* was of enormous sweep, wide enough for a carriage of State, in days gone by, to turn around in it; but for years the only animals to tread its pavements of blue stones had been a family of cats, red and black, kept by the Canon's servants to make war on the armies of rats and mice that lurked entrenched in the book racks. The bright spot about the place was the so-called "garden," an open space of some yards of free earth that supported a few clusters of flowers and three huge orange trees with black twisted trunks, gnarled with great knots where branches had been cut off, but shooting vertically upward in quest of a sunshine that gilded the walls and housetops but ventured only for rare and brief moments to creep down to the moist, moss-covered ground below.

These trees, city-bred, and who knows how many years old, made up at times for their imprisonment by bearing crops of oranges of a bounteousness hardly natural. To produce such fruit their roots must surely have bored deep into the ground to reach some forgotten cesspool. The oranges had an exasperating sweetness, a honeyed concentration, as it were, and a size

which Borja had met only in certain greengages he had once tasted in the cemetery of the ruined abbey in Brittany where Abelard, the lover of Héloise, had served as prior. And they seemed also to rot as rapidly and as easily as they had ripened—as was to be expected of things growing without regard to the ordinary rhythm of Nature.

Rosaura suddenly thought of one of the Canon's housekeepers whom Borja had mentioned a number of times, singling her out among the others because of the wonderful stories of saints and devils with which she had edified his childhood.

"What about Ramona? Is she still with you?"

Figueras could only admire a memory capable of recalling the name of a poor servant the lady had never seen. But his face fell. No, Ramona had been dead for over eight years. The two women who now managed his household had never known Claudio. They were newcomers, and hardly seemed to fit in that ancient house over three centuries old, which had seen the escutcheon over its main portal worn down by the rains and the ravages of Time till it was more like a formless cobblestone picked up from the bed of a river.

"All my old friends are dropping away, one by one," Figueras continued sadly. "Soon I shall be losing the house itself."

This eventuality, indeed, was the only cloud on the optimism with which he always looked forward to the future. One day or another, the proprietors of the mansion, a noble family residing in Madrid, would be forced to tear the building down. Architects and engineers had already condemned it. But don Baltasar, unable to imagine what he would ever do with all the books and papers he had collected, was inventing one reason or another to keep from moving, though he was well aware that he was doing so at the risk of suffocating some day under a crush of literature and falling walls! Perhaps he would be lucky enough to die before the old house! And in that case his manuscripts would pass to the Cathedral archives, or to the Historical Society of Madrid. Then, at last, those moderns could have their way. They could build on the site the apartment house

they were planning—one tier of cages on top of another, for people to live in like so many canaries in jail!

Señora de Pineda had expressed her welcome in the form of a luncheon, but as the three were rising from table, she took leave of her guests with the excuse that she must hurry to Monte Carlo to keep an appointment with some English friends at the Sporting Club. Claudio and his uncle should feel quite at home at the villa! Later in the afternoon she would send the car back, that Borja might show don Baltasar the sights of the Riviera, which seemed to have for him the combined allurement of mystery and danger. As Claudio guided the Canon through the garden, he wondered whether Rosaura had not fled to escape being bored. Don Baltasar was an interesting person, doubly attractive through all that Claudio had said of him, and from the fact that he was a man of the Church. Rosaura, true pagan, was always eager to mix the most contradictory things for the flavor of their contrasts. The combination of worldliness with Christianity was certain to procure her a special sensation. Nevertheless, it was dangerous to give the old man a loose rein once he had set out on some favorite historical theme! His talks had spirit and charm. They could hold even trivial minds for a certain length of time. But let him drift, for example, to the subject of the Borgias, and his hearers had good reason to exchange glances of alarm. The conversation would at once become a monologue, with don Baltasar talking for hours at a time, without being conscious of any effort at all! Then the Canon Figueras was as redoubtable as Saint Thomas's "man of one book." And almost anything would serve to bring him to his favorite theme!

Claudio had first remarked the Canon's mania for the Borgias in the old days of his childhood in Valencia. The good priest seemed actually to envy him for having a name identical with that of the Spanish Popes whom most people were accustomed to execrate. The boy remembered many visits he had made to the Cathedral archives in those days. To reach the library he had to climb a long flight of stairs raised between the ancient

stone walls of that originally Gothic church which a pious and too prosperous people had made over in classic style, rounding out the pointed ogives and sheathing the rough black granite with marbles, or coloring it with gold.

The records were kept in a number of rooms with plain white-washed walls, which don Baltasar had lovingly organized as a sort of museum. Specially precious documents he kept in wooden cabinets with glass tops. Other cabinets sheltered the seals and stamps which he had taken from ancient papers—wax medallions, red, yellow, green, so hardened by time that the imprints of churches, altars, saints' images, and heraldic escutcheons looked like engravings on steel. Framed under glass on one of the walls was a long strip of paper covered with a text arranged in columns and executed in a small hand. It was a report of expenditures, for arms, provisions and sailors' wages, made by one of the fleets of Roger de Lauria, who dominated the Western Mediterranean so completely that, as was said of him, "not even the fish dared sail its waters without the colors of Aragon stamped on their backs."

Don Baltasar was eager to show the little fellow all the treasures of this silent and secluded domain where he ruled in peaceful solitude for months at a time without an interruption from anyone. As he sat there at his desk of an afternoon deciphering paleographs and taking notes, he would hear the distant melodious roll of the Cathedral organ and the voices of his fellows in the canonicate who had gathered in the choir for the performance of the daily service. And this he called "poetic." It made him feel as though he were living in a world apart, beyond time, beyond space, in a sort of supernatural communion with centuries long dead, which had left as sole mementos of themselves a few sepulchral tablets in the church below, and a few rolls of parchment, yellowed with age, which were now spread out on wooden lecterns about his table.

One particular bundle was not exposed to view, but lay like some tempting jewel under lock and key in a strong-box, which the Canon opened to the child's gaze on two separate occasions:

"Look at this, my child," he had said with glowing eyes. "Look carefully! This is something of yours—it relates to your family! Can you make it out? 'Papers of the Borjas, afterwards called by their Italian name, Borgias.' Here you have a letter: 'Letter of Alexander the Sixth to his Elder Son, the Duke of Gandia.' And look at this: 'Autograph Letter of Cesare Borgia, later known as Duke Valentino.' But at the time he wrote it, he hadn't turned soldier yet! He was just Cardinal of Valencia."

So, one by one, don Baltasar had gone through the letters which the members of the powerful dynasty, finally established in Rome, kept sending to friends and relatives back in the city whence they had sprung.

"In what language do you think this is written?" Figueras would continue. "In Valencian, my boy, the dialect of our city! Valencian was the everyday language of the Borgias, the language they used among themselves while they lived in Italy, and the secret and sacred tongue of a clan hemmed in on all sides by spies and hypocrites.

"They also used Castilian to a notable extent. Cardinal Pietro Bembo, while still only an obscure litterateur in his home city, Venice, went to the trouble of learning Spanish that he might write to Lucretia Borgia in her native tongue. All the children of Alexander the Sixth, though they were born of Italian mothers and had never visited Spain, used Castilian in dealing with their father's friends and favorites, and Valencian, as a more intimate and affectionate form of expression, with Alexander himself."

The Canon would stand pensively silent for a moment and then, laying a hand on the little boy's head, he would add:

"The real value of these papers will be evident to you when you grow up. Then perhaps you will take upon yourself a task which I may not live to finish. You must come to the defense of your ancestors, who are victims of the greatest slanders known to history."

And during all the years that had passed, don Baltasar had not

changed in the least, so far as Claudio could judge from the conversation there in Rosaura's garden. Figueras seemed to have have been born just to talk of the Borgias and defend them.

They had found seats at the head of an avenue of flowers, which went down to the shore in a series of descending terraces. And by that tendency of the mind which often turns our thoughts to gloomy things as we find some specially beautiful vista before our eyes, so this segment of sunlit Mediterranean blue, its horizon dotted with a few white sails, made the learned Canon revert to the ruins of Rome as Rome was in the Fifteenth century, when the absence of the Popes in Avignon and the long-protracted struggles of the Great Schism of the West had made the city virtually an abandoned town.

"You know as much about that as I do, Claudio," Figueras began. "You often talked with me about a book you were going to write on 'The Pope of the Sea.' I am sure you never finished it—in fact I doubt if you ever wrote the first line. How can you do any serious work, living as you are living here? But, after all, you are familiar with the adventures of Pedro de Luna, of his battle with the Council of Constance, which reduced the number of Popes from three to one by installing Martin the Fifth in the pontificate. I remember you even followed don Pedro to his retreat in Peñiscola, going back on your promise, you rascal, to come on from there to Valencia for a visit with me! Well, at any rate, you can imagine what Rome was like after a neglect of almost a hundred years."

Martin the Fifth found the Eternal City peaceful, but otherwise like a great cemetery, the population all but annihilated by pestilence, public and private buildings empty and in a state of ruin. A few noble families clung to their towers, preying upon the country as bandits, issuing from their lairs to rob and kill the weak. Poverty was so general that funds were lacking even to light the lamps in Saint Peter's during great Church festivals. There were priests who actually died of starvation, and others went about clothed in rags like savages, and begging alms. Vegetation had begun to drape the walls of the ruined buildings.

The drainage system of the city had become unserviceable, and stagnant water gathered on the lower levels to form breeding places for malaria and plague. The roofs and walls of many churches had fallen in for want of money to repair them. The Coliseum was losing many of its arches. The Palatine had become a pasture for horses and goats, while herds of cattle browsed in the Forum. Whenever the powerful feudal lords needed materials for new construction, they would procure them from any building that happened to be handy. Thus famous palaces were stripped of their columns, their statues, their blocks of granite, to make modern walls, staircases, portals, and even stables and pigpens. If a few monuments of antiquity remained intact, it was because they were so cluttered with rubbish and shrubbery that it cost less effort to work elsewhere. The glorious edifices of classic Rome had become mere quarries, supplying their stones to new buildings, their marbles to the lime kilns.

The greatest devastation could be wrought in the short lifetime of one man. Poggio Bracciolini, the humanist, had known the Temple of Saturn almost in its ancient form. On returning to Rome after an absence of some years he found only the eight columns which may be seen still standing today. So the Tomb of Cecilia Metella vanished, one might say, before his eyes.

"In spite of such demolitions," don Baltasar continued, "the Rome of that day doubtless possessed more of her ancient buildings than we know in our time; and its very state of dilapidation gave the city an aspect of impressive beauty. Forests hundreds of years old had grown over the debris of quarters formerly populous, and medieval fancy filled them with ghosts, hobgoblins and witches. Whenever artists or learned men would try to excavate a ruin or make sketches of some abandoned palace, the Roman populace would suspect them as magicians or treasure-hunters."

The old Lateran palace, where the Popes had lived, was so far gone as not to be worth repairing. Saint Paul's had lost its roof and lay open to the destructive action of rain and weather—the shepherds of the *Campagna* driving their flocks into the build-

ing for shelter at night. Most of the houses around Saint Peter's had fallen down, and the streets of the Leonine City were impassable from the piles of debris. The vestibule of the famous basilica, the earliest church of Latin Christianity, had been stripped of all its ornaments. Through great breaches in the walls of Papal Rome packs of wolves would enter at night from the outlying plains, to roam undisturbed about the gardens of the Vatican, and even disinter the bodies in a nearby cemetery where victims of the plague had been hastily buried in great numbers.

"There was a change for the better," said don Baltasar, "under the first three Popes who settled in Rome after the Great Schism, Martin the Fifth, Eugene the Fourth and Nicholas the Fifth. Under their rule, the money of Christendom, which had formerly been going to Avignon, turned once more toward the Eternal City, and steps were taken to repair some of the ravages of past centuries. With new prosperity came a great reaction in morals and manners—Romans began to take a new interest in living."

The so-called Renaissance was now in full career. Scholars, writers, orators, poets, were gathering at the capitals of the various Italian states. The cult of ancient letters became a sort of religion. People forgot God to return to the gods. Divinities of Christianity were rebaptized with pagan names. For a thousand years or more classical learning had slumbered at Constantinople like a majestic mummy radiant in gold and fragrant with perfume. Now the civilized Byzantines were in flight before the on-coming Turks, and were bringing their love of classical letters to the towns of Italy. Two centuries earlier feudal lords in coats of mail, and noble dames perched on lofty thrones, had been supporting troubadours in the castles. Now it became the fashion to have a "Humanist" to furnish entertainment with his learned discourses, and an "orator" to exemplify the mysteries of eloquence. The orator, in fact, was indispensable. Cicero was now much more popular than Horace and Virgil. Eloquence dominated diplomacy and law—ambassadors were

called "orators." The princes and republics of Italy tried each to boast more elegant Latinists as their representatives than their rival states. An invitation to a dinner would announce as a special attraction a harangue in Latin, at dessert, by some celebrated Humanist. The Florentine Republic tried to bribe Alfonso of Aragon, King of Naples, by presenting him with a manuscript of Livy's "Histories"; and the same Spanish-Italian monarch once interrupted a musical program to listen to readings aloud from an ancient author whose text had just come into his hands. Everyone preferred the melody of Latin periods to the twanging of stringed instruments!

This enthusiasm for classical literature had been growing for a century since its beginnings in Petrarch and Boccaccio. Now the lords of the earth were naming their sons and daughters after heroes and heroines of antiquity. Ideals of life were also undergoing a profound change. For long centuries past people had been thinking of the salvation of their souls in a second life in Heaven. Now they began to set as much store on eternal Fame, or even on ephemeral celebrity, as the Romans or Greeks had done. Every man of parts thought of himself as a demi-god. When new churches were built, pagan images and pagan virtues were strangely mixed with Christian symbols in their ornaments. The Humanists, indeed, fanatics for everything ancient, slipped gracefully down the incline of heresy to become unbelievers in fact.

Lorenzo Valla, a celebrated Italian writer, treated the dogmas and the persons of the Christian tradition with an irony hardly less incisive than the precursors of the French Revolution were to use later on in the Eighteenth century. The Church winked at such daring to avoid open break with fashionable idols of the day. Lorenzo Valla was secretary to the King of Naples, who protected him from all attacks. The thought of this Humanist reminds one of an unbridled gallop forward after centuries of enshacklement. It was a gospel of pleasure, advocating the satisfaction of all appetites and a gay leap over the barriers which discipline and conventionality had raised against the instincts of

nature. To the free relations of the sexes, which he regarded as justified by Nature's law, Valla put only the limits of moderation and discretion, and such limits only because overstepping them might cause annoyance in a thing by nature pleasurable. Becadelli, a Humanist even more sceptical, author of "The Hermaphrodite," joined Valla in portraying sensuous indulgence as the supreme good within reach of man, and ascetic restraints advocated by Christianity as crimes against a kindly Nature. The profligate lives of the pagan gods were set up as exemplars of right living. All the Olympians, with the exception of Minerva, were devotees of carnal pleasures, and Jupiter in particular seemed unable to tolerate chastity in the neighborhood of his person.

Such doctrines were popular with the high and powerful of those days. No one dared make public profession of them—in the open they were condoned, rather, as amusing vagaries of interesting men of talent; but private life was secretly modeled on the theories held by Valla and his friends. No period in history ever witnessed such a general pursuit of pleasure in defiance of moral obstacles; at no other time has humanity shown such an unruffled equanimity in gratifying its passions. Virtually all the reigning princes of Italy were of illegitimate birth. The Bishops and Cardinals of the Church, together with certain of the Popes, followed in the footsteps of their lay subjects, surrounding themselves with casual offspring euphemistically disguised as "nephews," who would eventually be recognized as heirs and children without any mincing of words whatever.

"On his reception at Ferrara in the year 1459," said don Baltasar, "Pope Pius the Second, a Piccolomini, sometimes called the 'novelist Pope,' was welcomed by seven Italian rulers, every one of whom was a bastard. No one dreamed, in fact, of censuring the irregularities of the great. People sometimes smiled at the waywardness of high Church dignitaries, but never with any idea of horror or reproach; since from one end of Italy to the other, there prevailed a placid and matter-of-fact libertinage such as would be inconceivable today. Members of the clergy lived in public concubinage with one or more women. The rul-

ing families of Faenza, Rimini, Perugia, Siena, Milan—the Manfredis, the Malatestas, the Baglionis, the Pandolfos, the Sforzas, the Estes, not to mention the Spanish dynasty at Naples—paraded their incestuous vices in public without arousing protest, save from some exceptional reformer of the stamp of Savonarola."

Some prosperous families of the merchant class in the towns clung to the time-honored virtues and tried to live outside the whirl of general licentiousness; but the poorer people tended even to exaggerate the vices of those on high.

Paolo Baglioni, lord of Perugia, while living in marital relations with his sister, received a committee of notables from the citizenry without rising from bed, and listened to the harangue of their orator with his "wife" lying naked at his side. A prince of Ferrara had his wife decapitated for relations with one of her step-sons. Another woman was hurled from a tower because of excesses with a number of her nephews. The aged Pietro Mocenigo, Doge of Venice, was deprived, while ill, of two Turkish girls he had bought as slaves, but shortly after recovery he was found with four Venetian girls of tender age. Sigismondo Malatesta, lord of Rimini, a crafty warrior in the field, took women by violence, and killed such as refused him his way. This brutishness did not prevent him from writing poems, executing beautiful works in gold, patronizing the arts in general, and building Christian churches in the style of the ancient temples. Though such men took little stock in God, they had great faith in the Devil, and never launched an enterprise without consulting fortune-tellers, witches of renown, and astrologers.

In spite of the cynical libertinage in family life, public prostitution was rife throughout Italy. Venice, with three hundred thousand inhabitants, sheltered at one moment eleven thousand regular practitioners and probably as many more clandestine or occasional ones. The fad for imitating classical institutions allowed certain celebrated courtesans to attain, by dint of wealth and learning, a social eminence equal to that of the most famous Greek and Alexandrian *Hetairai*. Tullia d'Aragona was famous

throughout Europe for her beauty, her poetic talent, the voluptuous refinements which she had developed in an "Academy of Love" of which she was president. Fortune and health deserted her at an early age, and after wasting her millions, she died young as a waitress in a miserable tavern in Rome. The beautiful Imperia, who grew rich at the expense of the Florentine banker, Agostino Chigi, studied Italian and Greek with the most highly quoted Humanists of Italy, and corresponded on learned subjects with the fashionable scholars of the day. Whenever she went to Mass, the most honored places in the churches were reserved for her, and admiring crowds lined the streets to see her pass. Her charities were as lavish as her manner of living. Princes, prelates, merchants, came from all over Europe to visit her; but she surrounded herself with a galaxy of beautiful women, and extended her favors only when aspirants had been somewhat shaken in their eagerness through the temptations previously scattered in their paths.

"One of the most dissolute men of this age," said don Baltasar, giving vent to his indignation at the slanders which had been heaped by history on the Spanish Popes, "was the famous cardinal, Giuliano della Rovere, later Pope Julius the Second, and an implacable foe of the Borgias. Not only did he have a family of natural children, like Alexander the Sixth, but he was addicted to Alexandrian vices unknown to Rodrigo de Borja. I cannot say that the latter, or his son, Cesare Borgia, were saints, or models of virtue in a modern sense; but it moves me to wrath to see them painted as characters at all exceptional in their times, as devils suddenly appearing in a world of chaste men and women, as monsters of license abhorred by a society of well-behaved contemporaries.

"Let us say nothing of Pope Calixtus the Third, the first Borgia, a man of irreproachable virtue, whom a few venture to criticize only for having opened the road to ecclesiastical preferments to his nephew, the future Alexander the Sixth. But Rodrigo and Cæsar, the black sheep of your family, were men of their time, living as people of the time lived. Italian morals

were wholly corrupted long before these men appeared on the scene. The slander consists in suppressing this background, and emphasizing certain of their acts as exceptional outbursts of bestiality in an environment that actually was producing Sigismondo Malatesta and other *condottieri,* quite as depraved and bloodthirsty as he without his elegant refinements. As Pope, Rodrigo de Borja was one of the most energetic defenders of the Church's domain. But he, and Duke Valentino, his son, were strong characters, imposing their political will upon others over a period of several years. Thus they made many enemies who were only too eager to depict them as monsters. Besides they were foreigners in Italy; and Spaniards, in particular, were as much detested at that time by the Italians as were the French. When they died, there was no one ready to defend their memories, and the history hostile to them had a clear field. Writers of their day were usually careful enough, or conservative enough, to put a 'they say' or an 'I have heard,' before the most shameful imputations; but such dubitative qualifications were suppressed by later authors; and historians have gone on copying each other from generation to generation since, without entering into the question of the genuineness of the ancient reports themselves, but asserting as admitted fact ante-room gossip and inventions of the market-places."

The Canon's eyes shifted from Claudio to sweep the amphitheatre of trees and flowering plants that lay about and below him. It was as though he were now addressing a vaster audience.

"Of what, after all, do they accuse Pope Alexander the Sixth? That he had children? But Popes before him had had children, and others who ascended the throne of Saint Peter after his time had children! His crime consisted in having children who amounted to something, courageous, intelligent young men, of eager ambitions energetically pursued, true Borjas, in other words, enamoured of power and glory! Whereas, the usual offspring of the Popes remained mere parasites on the Vatican, sucking the blood of the Church like leeches, their whole souls bent on selling offices and hoarding money. Or shall we say that the Borgias

were specially depraved in their morals? In this case too we must extend the censure to Popes before and after them, Popes equally loose with women or addicted to more repulsive crimes."

Alexander the Sixth was one of the most delightful and attractive personalities of his time. He exercised a sort of hypnotic spell over the men and women who encountered him. Why then, for three centuries past, had he been regarded as one of the outstanding monsters of history?

"For two reasons!" cried the patriotic Figueras. "Italian enemies of the Church fell upon him, in preference to others, because he was not an Italian: and then the Protestants, in their war with the Church, singled him out, partly because the Church of his time was specially censurable from their point of view; but also because he was a Spainard, a native therefore of the country which spilled most blood in resisting the Reformation and sustaining Catholic unity!

"There you have the whole story! The Borgias were Spaniards! Therefore, Alexander the Sixth has been made the scapegoat for all the licentiousness and scandalous living of the Renaissance!

"Lucretia Borgia, Rodrigo's daughter, has suffered in this respect almost as much as her father. Many historians have come to her rescue, demonstrating the falseness of the charges laid at her door. But uninformed people are familiar only with the traditional picture of her character; and whenever some woman becomes involved in a murder involving poison, the ignorant reporter or the stupid reader will always be found to describe her as 'another Lucretia Borgia'."

The worthy Canon paused for a moment, to allow his indignation to concentrate in his flushed face:

"There's that man, Victor Hugo! I know how you admire him—and he deserves it! But you must admit that the play he wrote on Lucretia Borgia is something of which he should have been ashamed. Not only did he accept all the falsehoods which the enemies of the Borgias had invented, but he told a few new ones on his own account. In his tragedy he gives Lucretia an

illegitimate son, Gennaro, of whom there is absolutely no trace in history—the poet fabricated him out of whole cloth. And what does this alleged son do? He kills his own mother! As you know, the unfortunate Lucretia died a natural death as reigning princess of Ferrara—she died, that is, in giving birth to the last of her numerous legitimate children. A woman of devout life, her ascetic practices, such as wearing sack-cloth next to her body, were the admiration of her contemporaries. No one of these, not even the bitterest foes of her family, ever accused her of poisoning anyone!"

Then don Baltasar changed the direction of his wrath:

"It would not be so bad if it were only Victor Hugo! The play he wrote, probably the weakest of all his works, had long since been forgotten, when along came Donizetti and set it to music! And who is not familiar with this opera? What can one do in a case like that? Generations of stupid people have learned the story of Lucretia in an opera house to the accompaniment of Donizetti's music! And Hugo's plot, concocted during the wildest days of Romanticism, was still further falsified by an obscure libretto writer! The Lucretia of fiction is probably, alas, the only Lucretia who will ever be generally known!"

The thought seemed to sadden the fair-minded Canon, and he turned to Borja again in a tone almost of supplication.

"It is your duty to help me in this task of ordinary justice! The Borgias ought to interest you more than the Pope of the Sea! Don Pedro de Luna has been quite forgotten. No one is slandering his name. Your ancestors, however, are still being held up to public execration as models of bestiality."

He paused again, an expression of discouragement on his face.

"You see, I am handicapped, myself. I am a priest, and every time I sit down to tell the true story of the Borgias, I feel as though I were failing in one of the duties imposed upon me by the discipline of the Church. I have to stress things that many historians have deliberately overlooked, intent as they have been on making an exception of Alexander, an exception who was also a Spaniard! I can accuse Alexander only by censuring other

Popes of his period in history. Can I, a churchman, do such things with an easy conscience? But your case is different! You are a layman. You can tell the truth without betraying any sacred ministry!"

Claudio smiled absently. He had been listening to his uncle without comment, his real thoughts elsewhere:

The Borgias? What did he care about the Borgias? A year before, perhaps, they might have attracted him—then he was deep in Papal history, absorbed in the romantic adventures of Pedro de Luna. But now, he was living in another world, among far different thoughts, far different worries! Where could Rosaura be? For two hours she had been gone! Dancing with some man, probably, with not a thought in the world for her Claudio! And there was her car waiting for them at the garden gate! What was he doing so far from her? The Borgias? Why sit listening to a lecture by a bookworm, who was bursting a blood-vessel over a very problematical injustice done by other bookworms to people who had finished rotting in their graves four hundred years before?

CHAPTER III

The Last Crusader

A FEW days of residence on the Blue Coast and don Baltasar Figueras began to fidget and fret, eager to continue his journey to Rome. He had seen enough! The only thing he found interesting about Nice was the Old City and its vegetable and flower market, which reminded him of the Old Market of Valencia. As for the Principality, he preferred Monaco itself, with its narrow peaceful streets where he would encounter friars and nuns from time to time, and the great plaza in front of the Palace of the Princes where he could find artillery dating from the days of Louis XIV and pyramids of round cannon balls. The worthy cleric was inclined to admire anything old, and these useless guns, fit at the most for parading in a musical comedy, made him think of the esplanade at Monaco as a romantic fortress.

The heights of Monte Carlo, just neighboring beyond the Basin, inspired him with less respect. That, in his judgment, was a dangerous town inhabited by international bandits of most terrible mien; and as for the women, don Baltasar could find in his pious vocabulary no word that would describe them accurately and at the same time leave his modesty unabashed. Whenever he entered the Casino he would grow nervous and turn red, as though he were doing something wrong. Vainly Claudio pointed to a bevy of Portuguese priests who either were going to Rome or returning from a pilgrimage thither (nearly everyone who journeyed from the Peninsula to see the Pope halted at Monte Carlo to spend an hour or two at the famous Casino and risk a few coins on its green tables). Don Baltasar flatly questioned the genuineness of his Portuguese colleagues:

"I am sure they are Lutheran pastors!" he said.

Indeed nothing in that frivolous world of the French Riviera had the least interest for him. He had other things on his mind; and he announced to his nephew and to the "distinguished lady," whom he admired as some grand chatelaine of the good old days, an intention to proceed on his journey forthwith.

Rosaura invited him a second time to luncheon, evincing a sudden interest in his great enterprise of rehabilitating the Borgias—an eleventh-hour amiableness, probably, a desire to be agreeable to her guest now that he was really going. At any rate she listened with rapt attention to the Canon's description of the town of Játiva where the Spanish Arabs manufactured the first paper known to the Occidental world.

Girt about with the vast *huerta* of Valencia, where green meadows alternated with groves of palm, Játiva nestled under a hill in the shadow of a castle famous for the prisoners of distinction which had been held in its keeping. A gush of cold water burst from the hillsides and was distributed through the houses in free running conduits that spouted night and day into the stone troughs of the *patios*. These undying streams of pure water filled the town with a melodious gurgling that struck the ear of the passerby in front of every open door.

"The Borgias all came from Játiva," said don Baltasar, "though the first famous man of that family, Pope Calixtus the Third, was born not within the city but in the 'university' of Canals."

At signs of surprise on the faces of his companions at table, the aged scholar smiled with satisfaction and went on to explain:

"You know, words change as the centuries roll by. We Spaniards say *presidio* today when we mean 'penitentiary' though its original sense was 'citadel' or 'fortress.' So the old meaning of *university* was 'community,' 'guild,' 'corporation.' The 'University of Mariners' at Seville was not a school for navigation: it was just a brotherhood of seamen. In the same way in old Spain groups of houses too small to be called towns and attached more or less closely to some larger municipality were commonly called 'universities.'"

Don Baltasar had a prodigious memory for texts. He was

able to quote the exact words used by a theologian of the Eighteenth century in describing the unpretentious birthplace of the first of the Borgias: "The University of Canals was thus called because that was the name for any commonwealth too small to be called a city and too large to be called a village."

However, the Borgias sprang originally from a city in Aragon bearing their name, Borja. They had come down to Valencia with the don Jaime who reconquered that flowering province from the Moors. Even in those days they were remarkable individuals, men of noteworthy physique and vigorous mind, following the adventures of their sovereign with great enthusiasm, eager to glorify their house with resounding feats at arms, and devoted to the interests of their family with the primitive spirit of a clan.

Alfonso Borja was born on the last day of the year in which the Great Schism began—1378. Legend gathered even about his cradle and gave him great faith in his star. His mother often told him that while he was still a baby St. Vincent Ferrer, the great preacher and worker of miracles, had seen him and prophesied his ascent to the highest position in the Church.

"I ought to add," don Baltasar cautioned, "that the future saint made many other prophecies of the same kind. It cost him very little to make poor mothers happy in such ways."

Settled in Játiva with other knightly families in the king's company to watch the frontiers and hold off the Moors, who were forever trying to recover the Kingdom of Valencia, the Borjas multiplied and divided, the fortunes of their various branches varying as time went by. There were Borjas rich enough to uphold the prestige of their aristocratic descent. Others turned to agriculture and fell in social station, though the tradition of nobility among such never died out. Indeed, Alfonso Borja himself was a scion of one of these poorer families which lived by tilling the soil, but still retained the escutcheon and the pride of the great house. These lowly farmers of exalted lineage made boast of the title of "the Generous," which recalled their military antecedents. And the red bull which pranced across the golden

field of their banners gave visible reminder of the might and war-like inclinations of all who bore their name.

Don Alfonso went to Lérida to study law and won a lectureship while still a mere boy, and therewith a benefice from the Spanish Pope, don Pedro de Luna, who had high regard for the endowments of the youthful doctor. Ecclesiastical charges were in those days the best means of livelihood available for men of letters and law since they could be exploited without the obligations incumbent on priests.

When Alfonso the Fifth ascended the throne of Aragon he also perceived the merit of this young man, so expert in juridical problems and in diplomatic negotiations. He made him his secretary. The services Alfonso Borja had occasion to render Martin the Fifth (the Pope elected by the Council of Constance), opened his path to high honors within the Church. It was he who negotiated with Pope Luna's successor, the Valencian Canon, Gil Muñoz, Clement the Fifth so-called, for the surrender of the tiara at the Castle at Peñiscola; and the Roman Pontiff rewarded him for this work with the bishopric of Valencia. Thereafter he went to Naples in the train of Alfonso the Fifth and was of great assistance to that sovereign in reorganizing the new kingdom which had been torn to pieces by long wars.

"Alfonso the Fifth was rightly called 'The Magnanimous,'" said don Baltasar. "No sovereign of his time equalled him as a chivalrous and humane cavalier."

His fame as a perfect knight spread all over Europe, and Joan the Second of Naples, who had no children of her own, offered him the succession to her crown in exchange for his help against the Duke of Anjou, who was aspiring to the Neapolitan throne with the support of a party of local malcontents. Alfonso the Fifth conquered the realm with the help of a fleet from Aragon and ruled for a time as co-sovereign with the aged Joan, on the understanding that the succession after her death should pass to the Duke of Anjou. However, the Aragonese warrior did not accept this compromise. He prosecuted the war, and after many vicissitudes of fortune, finally, in the year 1443, became undis-

puted master of the territory, settled there, and never went away again.

"As a matter of fact," said don Baltasar, "this Spanish sovereign lived a larger part of his life in Italy than in Spain. According to one legend an affair of the heart contributed to keeping him far from his native land. Shortly after his coronation in Aragon and during his residence in Valencia, his favorite city, he fell in love with doña Maria de Híjar, a noble lady of the latter town. Don Alfonso, however, was married to one of his cousins, doña Maria of Castile, daughter of Henry the Third. It is said, I do not know how justly, that in a fury of jealousy the Queen caused her rival to be murdered, and that Alfonso the Fifth, in consequence of this romantic adventure, lived for thirty-eight years apart from his wife, either making war or ruling his kingdom, at Naples."

Don Baltasar vaunted the popularity in Italy of this Spanish sovereign, patron of arts and letters. The most enthusiastic Humanists sought his court at Naples and, truly enamored of glory, don Alfonso tried to deserve the eulogies of these literary men who were in those days the fountainheads of all celebrity. He bestowed titles of knighthood upon Byzantine scholars who had been exiled from Constantinople, and they came to give their lessons at Naples and in Sicily. Anecdotes of the King's respect for classical learning abound. It is said that on one occasion a fly settled on his nose during a reception; but he refused to lift his hand to remove the annoyance in order not to lose a word of the Latin oration which a celebrated orator was delivering in his honor. He sometimes suffered from attacks of great nervousness, and on such occasions would turn to readings of the classical authors as a magical remedy. On occupying certain towns which had resisted him in his conquest of Naples he would pardon them on remembering that they were the birthplaces of great men of Antiquity.

While fighting the Duke of Anjou in Provence, the home territory of his adversary, he took possession of Marseilles, but

refused the gifts which the ladies of that city offered him as a reward for saving them from acts of plunder.

"I have come," he said, "to wreak my vengeance as a prince, not to make war as a thief."

While besieging Gaeta he allowed women and children to depart from the famished fortress, though the saving of food thus resulting enabled the garrison to hold out for a long time. In pardoning some conspirators who had attempted his life, he said:

"I will oblige them to admit that I am more thoughtful of their necks than they are themselves."

During a storm at sea one of his transports was about to founder. When the King observed that his directions for rescue were being obeyed with some reluctance, he leapt into a lifeboat and called to his men:

"I would rather be a companion, than a witness, of their death."

And this courageous resolve so emboldened his sailors that they saved the ship.

The worthy Canon began to hitch uneasily in his chair, as though he were apologizing to the beautiful lady who sat across the table from him:

"The only thing for which he could be blamed was his great attachment to women, a weakness that pursued him all through his life down to his last years. He was nearly sixty when his senile infatuation for the young and beautiful Lucrezia di Alagno was the subject of some mirth at Naples, though he insisted his passion was a purely ideal affair. Advancing years left little mark upon his majestic carriage and handsome appearance."

When Alfonso de Borja became Pope under the name of Calixtus the Third, disagreements arose between sometime secretary and master, since the Pope regarded his former lord as a vassal of the Church. On that occasion the beautiful Lucrezia di Alagno went to Rome in imposing state and was welcomed there as a sovereign. However Calixtus the Third refused to authorize a second marriage on the King's part, holding faithful to his long-standing friendship with the legitimate Queen, doña

Maria, who was living in Spain, now at Saragossa, now at Valencia. Save for the Pope's opposition the beautiful Lucrezia would have become Queen of Naples.

"But let us return," said the Canon, "to the amazing career of this sometime professor of Lérida and rector of the parish of St. Nicholas in Valencia who rose to highest honors in the Church. Alfonso de Borja's efforts to effect a reconciliation between his Sovereign and Pope Eugene the Fourth won him a Cardinal's hat in the year 1444, his titular church being the ancient Basilica of the Four Crowned Saints located on the *Monte Celio* in Rome. At the Pontiff's request he remained in Rome, distinguishing himself as a Cardinal of independent spirit, free from practices of flattery and petty politics."

Though Borja had not taken holy orders till his nomination as Bishop, the simplicity and purity of his private life attracted attention in that epoch of worldly churchmen who rivalled the lay princes in dissoluteness and mundane display. The Cardinal of Valencia lived modestly and in rigorous celibacy. Even during the days when he was governing Naples as delegate of Alfonso the Fifth and was making enemies through the strictness of his rule, the pamphleteers of the Realm could find nothing more serious to say to his discredit than that he was fond of perfume and enjoyed the conversation of ladies at court—traits to be taken for granted in a royal counsellor accustomed to court life, and to which no scandalous anecdotes could be added.

As he advanced in years his devotion to study and the heavy duties incident to his assiduous labors with the King of Naples so shattered his health that he was one of the least sturdy among the Cardinals in the Pope's following. Sometimes in conversation with intimates he would refer sadly to the prophecy of Master Vincent Ferrer. Alas, no, he would never get to be Pope! For once the Holy Preacher had been mistaken! Another frail ascetic, John of Capistrano, who was also eventually to attain a shrine, was a great friend of Alfonso de Borja and often heard such refutations of the Saint's prophecy from the Cardinal's lips.

Three Popes had occupied the See of St. Peter since the days

of the Council of Constance: Martin the Fifth, Eugene the Fourth, and Nicholas the Fifth, all of them Italians. On the death of Nicholas, the so-called "Bookworm" Pope, who had busied himself coddling Humanists and purchasing rare manuscripts, while the Turks, now established in Constantinople, were encroaching on Central Europe, the choice of a new pontiff seemed to present a serious problem. The prestige of the Church had fallen very low. Kings and princes were disobeying the Pontiff at will after all the humiliations to which the Holy See had been subjected during the Great Schism. In Rome itself there was a strong anti-Papal party aiming at the establishment of a republic. It was during the reign of Eugene the Fourth that Stephen Porcaro, a bold patrician of better parts than Rienzi, tried to proclaim such a republic, going to the gibbet, in the end, at the Pope's order. Had the eloquent and shrewd Porcaro been living in the month of March, 1455, the meeting of the Conclave to choose a new Pope would surely have been the signal for a great popular uprising.

Two aristocratic factions, headed respectively by the Colonnas and the Orsinis, were continually at war with each other for control of the city. At this time they transferred their rivalries to the Conclave with a view to obtaining the tiara. A Cardinal Colonna and a Cardinal Orsini came forward as candidates, and began seeking support by dint of money and intrigue. Of the fifteen elector Cardinals, seven were Italians, two were French, two were Greek, and four—Torquemada, Lacerda, Carvajal, and Borja—were Spaniards. No one had been considering the possibility of a non-Italian Pope. The chief issue of the Great Schism had been the opposition of Rome to any Pope who was not of Italian origin. Even at the Council of Constance, a great international assemblage, the choice of an Italian, Martin the Fifth, had been necessary to put a final end to conflict. Granted that neither Colonna nor Orsini had a decisive number of votes, people had been thinking of other Italian candidates—either Scarampo, a wealthy Cardinal of military inclinations, or Pietro

Barbo, who, in fact, years later, was to become Pope under the name of Paul the Second.

"As a matter of fact," said don Baltasar, "Pietro Barbo was the favored candidate as the Conclave opened. But the Romans have a jingle which says: 'To enter the Conclave as Pope is to leave as Cardinal'; and the adage once more came true. The moment the sessions opened, those who preferred an independent candidate upon whom all could agree, turned toward Cardinal Bessarion, a Greek refugee of great learning, who had been living apart from politics in his solitude as a scholar. But Bessarion did nothing to press his candidacy; and some of the Cardinals felt that it would be a disgrace to lift a Byzantine convert, freshly issued from the Greek Schism and still wearing a beard in Oriental style, so suddenly to the leadership of the Roman Church. In the third place, wordly ecclesiasts after the manner of Scarampo were much alarmed at the austere morality of Cardinal Bessarion. Weeks went by. Many fruitless ballots were taken. The Roman mob was growing restless. At last the contending parties decided to postpone their issue till another time, and compromise on one of the oldest Cardinals, a man friendly to the powerful King of Naples, and whose wasted physique gave promise of very short tenure in the high office. Thus was Alfonso Borja unexpectedly elected Pope at the age of seventy-seven, under the name of Calixtus the Third."

The Roman populace was astounded at this victory of a Spaniard. The age-old antagonism to foreign Popes, which had given rise to the Great Schism, had suddenly failed of effect again. Pedro de Luna, the last Pope of Avignon, was triumphing after a sleep of thirty-two years in his tomb! Despite his virtues the Catholic world had refused him because he was a Spaniard! Now here another Spaniard had risen to the throne in that Rome on which the other Spaniard had never been able to rest his eyes! There was fear for a moment that the Italian cardinals would leave the Holy City to elect a second pontiff in another Conclave, thus opening the Schism anew. The unwelcome Pope was straightway dubbed "the old Catalan," and his

friendship with the King of Naples was regarded as an indication that the realm to the south would soon be enlarging its boundaries.

In calling Borja a Catalan, Figueras explained, the Italians were venting the dislike in which the Catalans were held throughout Italy. While never so unpopular as the French, their presence was none the less odious and intolerable to native Italians. Spaniards were in control of Sicily and Naples. Catalonian fleets were waging war at sea upon the galleys of many Italian republics and principalities. The Romans were afraid that the new Pope would garrison the fortresses of the Church with Catalan mercenaries and that after his death it would be difficult to dislodge them.

But the peaceful, kindly disposition of Alfonso de Borja, his fame as a fair-minded man of pure morals, the austerity of his personal habits and his affable manner toward everyone, finished by quieting such alarms. Furthermore, this descendant of the knights of Játiva, eternal antagonists of the Moors, at once proclaimed that the leading policy of his pontificate would be to fight the Turks and recover Constantinople, which his predecessor, "the Bookworm," had allowed to be lost, with heart-rending laments, to be sure, but taking no effective measures to prevent such a catastrophe to Christianity.

The first days of the Spanish pontificate were, nevertheless, not happy ones. Rome continued living under menace of civil war, its population divided among implacable warring bands. The coronation of the first Borgia took place on the 20th of April. Calixtus appeared in the Basilica of St. Peter early in the morning. There a priest, to remind him of the fleeting duration of earthly things, burned a handful of tinder in his presence, and cried:

"Holy Father, *sic transit gloria mundi!*"

Next he celebrated Mass, with the assistance of the two Cardinals who, in the Conclave some days previous, had seemed to be the most probable Popes at a time when no one was thinking of him. Cardinal Orsini chanted the Epistle, and Cardinal Colonna

the Gospel. Finally the coronation took place in the square in front of the Basilica. Prospero Colonna, the eldest of the Cardinal-Deacons, placed the *tryreinum* on Borgia's head with the words:

"Receive this tiara adorned with the three crowns, and know that thou art father of princes and kings, counsellor of good order, vicar on earth of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the honor and the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Thence the new Pope proceeded to take possession of the Church of St. John *in Laterano,* the titular sanctuary of the Pope of Rome—just as each of the Cardinals had his titular church. His cortège of honor comprised eighty Bishops clothed in white, the whole College of Cardinals in purple, many knights and barons in armor, and all the magistrates of the Eternal City. As he rode along on a pure white charger the sometime lad from the "University" of Canals seemed, despite his years and bodily infirmities, to have been made young again. It was as though the great authority conferred upon him had filled him with new blood. No longer was he mere councillor to a King of Aragon. He now sat exalted above all monarchs on earth.

According to an ancient custom, a deputation of the Jews resident in Rome met the coronation procession on *Monte Giordano* and offered the new Pontiff a copy of the Book of their Law, richly bound. The Pope read a few words aloud from it, and then said:

"We confirm your law, but we condemn your interpretation; for He who it says will come has already come, verily none other than Jesus Christ our Lord—such the teaching and the preachment of the Church."

For the plebs of Rome the election of a Pope was ever the occasion for rioting, plunder, and brutal amusements. At times when the Holy See was vacant the Papal capital lived in a state of virtual anarchy. The authority of the dead pontiff was no longer respected; the officials newly named would still be uncertain and hesitant about their own prerogatives. It was the custom, in particular, to sack the palace of the Cardinal who

had just obtained the election. Why not? He was moving to a new residence in the Vatican! The mobs thought they had a full right to carry away everything in his former home—furniture, garments, jewels. In course of time, Cardinals who had hopes of higher honors learned to take precautions before leaving their residences to shut themselves up in the Conclave. They would fill their houses with crossbowmen and infantry to repel the assaults of the multitude in case they triumphed at the elections.

While Calixtus the Third was performing the time-honored ceremonies with the Jews on *Monte Giordano,* the mob that had gathered about felt tempted by the splendor of the wonderful volume bound in gold, and to get possession of it charged and trampled the Papal Guards. In the confusion that resulted, the aged pontiff was all but crushed; and though his soldiers managed to repel the rioters with sword and lance, they were not in time to save the gilded and bejewelled litter on which the Pope was carried about inside the churches, and which followed him in this procession as a symbol of his office.

Another and more serious incident was to mark the Pope's passage through the *Campo de' Fiori.* At that period Napoleon Orsini was at odds with the Count of Anghillara and their respective partisans were knifing each other cordially about the streets of Rome. The Count's palace was located on the *Campo de' Fiori.* It occurred to Orsini that while he happened to be just there it would be a good idea to sack his rival's palace! "All loyal Orsinians follow me!" he called, leaving the cortège and spurring his horse to a gallop. In a few minutes no less than three thousand men-at-arms had appeared on the scene to support the attack, while shortly the Colonnas rode up with a force just as numerous to rescue the Count of Anghillara. The rival parties were promising to stage a real battle in the presence of the new pontiff when the Cardinals Colonna and Orsini managed to intervene and prevent the combat by appeals to their respective relatives. One of the first measures of Calixtus the Third was to appoint a commission of Cardinals under Pietro Barbo to

arrange a truce of some months between the rival families that the Papal States might have a breathing space. He needed all his time and energy, he said, for the war against the Turks.

It soon became apparent that this Spanish Pope had no intention of removing the Papal Court from Rome—to Spain perhaps, in imitation of the French pontiffs who had settled at Avignon.

"This aged Spaniard," said don Baltasar, "was a man of broader vision and less provincial ideas. His one concern was the welfare of Christianity at large, his one enterprise the attempt to reconquer Constantinople and the Holy Land. The Humanists, who had been living parasitic lives on the generosity of princes and Popes, found little support in this sometime jurist. Calixtus the Third was not hostile to the Renaissance: he was merely indifferent to it, choosing to devote such monies as he could raise rather to wars against the Infidel than to salaries for mercenary writers of facile eloquence—quite the contrary, in this respect, of his predecessor, Nicholas the Fourth, who had been an ingenuous and gullible erudite."

"It is a curious fact," continued the Canon, "that the only Humanist favored by this pious Pope was the skeptic, Lorenzo Valla. The moment he ascended the Papal throne he made the terrible free-thinker his private secretary and assigned him a number of very desirable benefices. Probably Calixtus the Third was influenced in this by the friendship that had sprung up between them at the time when, as Governor of Naples, he had had Valla in his service. Valla, however, was not long to enjoy the consolations of such distinguished favor. He died two years later."

The aged pontiff was sincere in his plans for a Crusade. He announced that he intended to pawn his own tiara to raise money and he even stripped bindings of precious metal from manuscripts in the library of the Vatican. King Alfonso of Naples, on the watch for objects of art, of which he was a competent connoisseur, bought from the Pope vases, beakers, chalices, medallions in precious metals and, in particular, a tabernacle for holy wafers with priceless designs in enamel. The Pope was already

eating his meals off earthenware and issuing a brief in which he vowed he would content himself with a mitre of plain cloth, since all the jewels of the Church should be sold in behalf of the holy war.

Europe looked on in admiring apathy at these efforts of an old man who had suddenly recovered the enthusiasm of youth. Calixtus the Third was thinking of himself as the champion and *imperator* of Christianity against the Infidels. Only a Spaniard could show such a keen hatred for the Mohammedans. The nations of Northern Europe had long since forgotten the Crusades, and those wars, indeed, had been only one episode in a long history. In Spain, however, the struggle with the Mussulmans had lasted unbroken for seven centuries. The Moors were still holding the beautiful Kingdom of Granada and offering direct threat to the existence of the Spanish nation.

The Pope's plan was to make an alliance of the whole Christian West against the new emperor in Constantinople, carry armed aid to the Hungarians in their resistance to the Turks, and create a Papal fleet which would operate in the Greek Archipelago, where they were rapidly gaining control. All the chronicles of the epoch voice astonishment at such warlike zeal and strength of purpose in an aged man who had been supposed at death's door. Routine affairs of the Church Calixtus would dispose of rapidly, in a few words; but to this matter of the Crusade he would devote lengthy conferences, going into all the details. To conserve funds, he dismissed all writers and artists who were continuing in the Pope's pay, unless, by chance, a few of them could be found useful in connection with the preparations for war. He set his sculptors to work cutting stone cannon balls for his artillery. Painters and designers were commissioned to make war banners. Calixtus exhorted the kings of Christendom to take up the Cross and march forth against the Turks. Priests in all the parishes of the Western world were required to make contributions to the imminent campaign.

"But alas," sighed the Valencian scholar, "the warlike faith of the olden days had vanished. Money was indeed raised in the

different countries, but the sovereigns cynically transferred the offerings to their own pockets. Alfonso the Fifth of Aragon was the first to set this bad example. In fact, he did even worse! Pedro de Urrea, Archbishop of Tarragona, assembled a fleet at the request of the Pope and put it in command of Antonio Olcina. But instead of sailing for Ostia to be placed at the Pope's disposal, the vessels joined the fleets of King Alfonso and began harassing the Genoese and other Christian states with which that King was at war. Vainly the aged pontiff made remonstrance to Archbishop and King, denouncing them as traitors. He was the only ruler in the West willing to do anything to halt the spread of the Crescent! The others laughed at his idea as an absurd fancy of a man in his dotage."

And yet the fiery will of this Spanish enthusiast began to produce visible and almost miraculous results. The sleepy and hitherto deserted shores of the Tiber awakened to laborious life at his ringing call. Great arsenals sprang up on the *Riva Grande.* A shipyard was built in the neighborhood of Santo Spirito. Agents of the Pontiff scoured all Italy to recruit companies of sailors and shipbuilders. It was his pleasure to devote himself to the preparations personally. When he was not penning letters of admonishment to the kings, inviting them to assume the Cross, he was going from merchant to merchant buying iron, pitch, or timber for his vessels, or watching his armorers fit the stone cannon balls to their bombards, or make the crossbows, shields, armor, swords, chains, anchors, cables, that would be used on the expedition. He was as careful about the hardtack the crews would use for food as he was about the banners and pennants that would float from the masts of the galleys. He even thought of providing each captain with five reams of paper that they might make report of their achievements.

Lodovico Scarampo was one of the richest princes in the Church, and he would have been very willing to take his ease in his luxurious palace in Rome; but he had shown himself the best general among all the Cardinals in the Sacred College. Overcoming Scarampo's objections, Calixtus made him Cardinal-

Admiral of the fleet, pinned the emblem of the Cross Militant upon his shoulder with his own hands, and finally persuaded him to put forth from the Mouths of the Tiber toward the end of June in the year 1456.

The fleet was made up of twenty-five galleys carrying a thousand sailors, five hundred soldiers, and three hundred cannon. This naval miracle Calixtus had wrought with his own hands. Charles the Seventh, King of France, abused the good faith of the Pontiff as the King of Naples had done. Vainly the Pope evoked the example of St. Louis, hero of the Crusade in Egypt. The descendant of that holy king calmly pocketed the money raised against the Turks and diverted all the vessels the Pope had bought in France to the fleets that were waging war on the English and the Neapolitans.

While Calixtus was dispatching Scarampo's fleet to meet the Turks, taking no account of the relative weakness of the expedition and harboring many illusions as to what it might actually accomplish, he was also planning to send assistance to the Hungarians, against whom the Sultan Mohammed had launched an attack, invading Central Europe. This aid also proved to be more spiritual than effective. No Christian sovereign would send such troops as were promised. It become more and more apparent that the era of the Crusades was over. The Pope was alone in seriously imagining that Europe as a whole could be roused against the Mussulmans. Calixtus was being jokingly dubbed "The Last Crusader" about Courts in the West.

As it turned out, Calixtus got just two men into Hungary: one, the Spanish cardinal, Juan de Carvajal, as energetic and persistent as the Pope himself in the struggle against the Infidel; the other, a friar likewise of the Pope's personal entourage, already some seventy years old and in failing health from a life of ascetic privation: the future Saint John of Capistrano. Carvajal spent six years as Papal Legate in Vienna and Buda, organizing resistance to the Turk. He had only moderate success. He did manage to arrange truces between rival Hungarian barons and persuade some of them to forget their private quarrels and join

the Crusade. The most famous of these was the heroic Hunyadi Janos.

Capistrano, for his part, went about from place to place preaching to the multitudes and rousing them to arms.

The two men came to Hungary with empty hands and with no resources more tangible than the flaming words of the Pontiff. Yet they successfully improvised an army. Real soldiers thought the expedition ridiculous as compared with the forces of the Turks, who were then regarded through all Europe as invincible. Hunyadi organized seven thousand Hungarians at his own expense and Capistrano and Carvajal came in with a motley throng of artisans, peasants, friars, hermits and students, who had been charmed by their preachments and presented themselves for the sacrifice with such weapons as they could find—scythes, sickles, spears. Some of these Christian volunteers were adventurers with an eye on possible plunder; but most of them were enthusiasts eager to reach heaven by dying in the service of the Cross. Several companies of German knights and men-at-arms gave a certain military air to the disorganized and unequipped mob which the friar had mustered.

The Sultan Mohammed, backed by an artillery of unprecedented power and by the invincible hosts which had stormed Constantinople, was at the moment before Belgrade, the gateway to Hungary. The Grand Turk thought that after taking this city he could easily make his way into the heart of Europe.

Hunyadi with his irregulars advanced to the relief of Belgrade, at his side, Capistrano, holding aloft a crucifix which the Pope had given him, and calling in a loud voice upon the name of Jesus. In defiance of military tactics and all the laws of probability, this rabble of enthusiasts devoted to death dashed upon the Turkish lines, broke through, and joined the garrison in Belgrade. Then firing the defenders to a fury which proved wholly disconcerting to the besiegers, they turned about, hurled themselves once more upon the Turks, swept everything before them, captured the Turkish camp and the Turkish cannon, and drove the famous conqueror of Constantinople from the field in flight.

The battles which took place between the 14th and 21st of July in the year 1456 caused astonishment throughout Christendom, where everyone had been predicting disaster for the Pope. A powerful blow was struck at the prestige of the Half Moon, hitherto regarded as unconquerable. The old wooden-headed Spaniard had carried off the first honors against the Turks!

The desperate and bloody fighting under the walls of Belgrade came to be known as the "Battle of the Three Johns," since Hunyadi, Carvajal, and Capistrano all bore that baptismal name. When the first news of the victory reached Rome the aged Borgia wept and laughed for joy, deporting himself with the bubbling enthusiasm of a child. Men had played him false, but God had given him a single-handed victory over the hosts of the enemy! Though the plague was raging with deadly consequence in Rome, Calixtus refused to abandon his city as most of his courtiers were doing. He believed that with such a challenge to death he would win greater favor in Heaven for his enterprise. In reports to their Sovereigns many Ambassadors in Rome paid heartfelt tribute to the iron will of this admirable octogenarian. However, the Christian States as a whole looked on impassively at the unexpected triumph, and the Republic of Venice even made a secret alliance with the Turks.

In Hungary an epidemic shortly broke out on the great corpse-strewn battlefield and the heroic Hunyadi succumbed to it a few weeks after his triumph. Somewhat later his comrade in arms, John of Capistrano, also perished. Carvajal stayed on in Hungary devoting all his eloquence to marshalling a new army; but the dissensions and rivalries among the Hungarian barons paralysed his efforts.

Another hero, the famous Scanderbeg, a prince of Albania, whose real name was George Castriota, received denomination as the "Athlete of Christ" at the hands of Calixtus the Third. This romantic warrior entered battle with his arms stripped of armor and his sleeves rolled up that he might wield sword or mace more effectively. He held his ground for twenty-four years

against the Turks, meeting armies ten or twenty times greater than his own, and blocking the Mohammedan advance westward. Unable to give him soldiers or money, the first Borgia lent him encouragement with blessings and high-sounding names. In the year 1457 the "Athlete of Christ" won the most brilliant and bloody of his victories at the Battle of Tomorniza, so-called; whereupon the Pope appointed him "Captain-General of the Roman Curia."

Meantime the Pope's squadron made its way into the Aegean and idled about from week to week with no positive offensive against the enemy. Cardinal-Admiral Scarampo was not enthusiastically received in the Greek islands. The people who lived there were convinced that the Turks were destined to become their masters and were not eager to compromise themselves by helping the Papal cause. Finally Scarampo stumbled upon a Turkish fleet off Mitylene and completely destroyed it, capturing some twenty-five vessels by a boarding operation.

This was to prove a final satisfaction for the "Last Crusader." Calixtus kept busily at work with new preparations down to the day of his death, but, though he knew many disappointments, he was consoled with no further victories. For lack of cooperation his capricious successes on land and sea led to no permanent results. He was hampered by indifference in his own camp, and even indirectly opposed by Christian princes and by most of his clergy. Sometimes he would reflect sadly on this isolation and exclaim:

"Great is the harvest, but the workers are few."

Don Baltasar decided to condense his narrative, and he concluded:

"Our Spanish Pope came to the rescue of Christianity too late. The first Borgia was the last Pope of the age of true Faith. He never thought of his astounding triumphs as a result of his own energy and foresight. In his modest eyes they were answers to the prayers he had himself addressed to God and recommended to the rank and file of Christians, when the princes denied him their aid. Had the rulers of the West not betrayed him and

robbed him, who knows but what Alfonso Borgia might have raised the Cross again over the walls of Constantinople!"

Figueras fell silent, and when it was evident that he had nothing more to say, Rosaura rose and offered him her hand:

"Why, it's four o'clock! How rapidly time flies when don Baltasar begins telling us a story! I must hurry to an appointment now! My friends are waiting! We will see each other again on your way back from Rome, when I hope you will find it possible to spend some days in this house. Meantime, you two must make yourselves at home here and continue your talk about such interesting matters."

And she disappeared, leaving Claudio Borja in doubt as to whether a sly touch of irony may not have lingered in her last words.

CHAPTER IV

The Borjas Become Borgias

ONCE enmeshed in his favorite theme, don Baltasar could never find strength of will to set limits to his narratives. Besides, this would be the last day he would have with his nephew.

"There is still a great deal to the story," he said. "Supposing we step out into the garden. Later on in the afternoon you can take me to Nice and I will give you a number of reviews I have in my baggage—articles of mine on the subject of the Borgias which you may find interesting—all new materials I have dug up myself. No one knows that family as I do. Meantime, I ought to explain some other points."

And the Canon led his companion to the same bench in the garden where they had talked the days before, sat down beside him, and resumed his lecture, interrupted only by curious inquiries which Claudio interjected from time to time:

"The only reproach that could justly be made against Calixtus the Third was his exaggerated attachment to members of his family. We have to admit that the Borjas loved each other and worked for each other with an almost furious loyalty. It was something like the sense of kinship that prevails in a savage tribe surrounded on all sides by enemies. But then again, was there ever a Pope in those days or any others who did not favor his own relatives and look upon his nephews, especially, with a father's affection? Furthermore, the 'Old Catalan,' as his rivals called him, was really a foreigner among the Romans and needed to have about him people whom he could trust because of common family interests or national sympathies."

The Canon's face grew red as he assailed historians who blamed Calixtus the Third for making a Cardinal of his nephew, Rodrigo

de Borja, and said nothing of Nicholas the Third, Paul the Second, Sixtus the Fourth, Innocent the Eighth, Julius the Second, and other Popes, who bestowed red hats on men notorious for things other than their virtues. The two Riarios, Peter and Raphael, nephews and perhaps children of a Pope, were Cardinals of much more scandalous conduct than the Borgias and had none of the elegance and refinement of the latter to atone for their bestial perversities.

"But these gentlemen were born in Italy and could therefore be excused," added the Canon sarcastically. "The great sin of Calixtus the Third and his relatives was that they were Spaniards and had the impudence to be governors of Rome."

From his boyhood Alfonso de Borja had shown himself the man of greatest promise in his prolific clan, and the family expected great things of him. He was the only boy in a brood of five children. The sisters were Juana, Francisca, Isabel and Catalina. When Alfonso became an intimate and counsellor to the King, the wealthy Borjas, who still retained their social prominence in the region of Játiva, began to pay more attention to this poorer branch of their family, which had suddenly produced so important an individual; and they arranged a match at Játiva between Isabel, the third sister, and one of her distant cousins, Geoffrey de Borja, who came from the richest and most distinguished line.

"For three centuries or more, historians have been perpetuating an error which gave the name of Llansol to the gentleman who married Isabel de Borja. On that basis, Rodrigo de Borja, who became Pope Alexander the Sixth, would really be, not a Borja, but a Llansol. This, in fact, has been one of the charges used to blacken the reputation of that Borgia. He was accused of disrespect to his father, Llansol, by throwing aside his real name and taking that of his mother. There is as little to that story as there is to most of the slanders that have been made against the family. The Llansols—as you know, the word is of Valencian origin and means 'sheet' or 'shroud'—were warrior barons, who likewise came down from Aragon with Don Jaime, the King,

to wrest the realm of Valencia from the Moors. In fact, a man of the Llansol family did marry one of the sisters of Calixtus the Third; and to this pair was born a son named Llansol y Borja, who got to be a Cardinal and was often confused with the Borja who became Pope Alexander the Sixth. The latter's parents were both of the Borja family. His real name in Spanish would therefore have been Rodrigo Borja y Borja."

Canon Figueras owned a document by which Calixtus the Third, at the time rector of the parish of Saint Nicholas in Valencia, paid over five hundred florins in Aragonese gold as his share of the dowry of his sister, Isabel de Borja, who was marrying Geoffrey de Borja, then a resident, unmarried, of Játiva.

"You should note, however," said don Baltasar, "that don Geoffrey appears in the document with the Latin title of *dominicellus* or *domicellus,* which, according to the legal usages of those days, was given to the sons of noble families. Throughout the realm of Aragon a nobleman already trained in the military profession was called a *miles*—a common translation of the Spanish title *caballero,* 'gentleman-at-arms,' 'knight.' It would follow that, at the time of his marriage, don Geoffrey had not yet been dubbed a knight, and therefore had to rest content with the lower title."

Along with his own documents, don Baltasar had unearthed sufficient papers in the archives of the Cathedral to reconstruct the whole career of his hero in detail.

Rodrigo de Borja was born in Játiva in the house of don Geoffrey, his father, situate near the Market on a square called, precisely, the *Plaza de los Borja.* A certain Antonio Nogueroles served as his tutor and "governor." He was nursed by a woman known to us now only as *la Villena.* Everyone called him *Rodriguet,* and he played his childhood games with a sister named Tecla, also known by a Valencian diminutive, *Tecleta.*

"My documents," said don Baltasar, "describe him as a noticeably dark-complexioned boy with black hair, and speak of him as *'morrudet,'* which means in Valencian, as you know, 'with thick lips.' There were four horses in his father's stable, and

Rodriguet, from the time he was eight years old, was often to be seen riding about, in a short coat, through the streets of Játiva. On his father's death, the mother, doña Isabel, moved with all her family to Valencia, the capital—the boy was ten years old at the time—where she was received with great attention as the sister of a personage of such increasing prominence in the Church."

While Alfonso de Borja was still a Cardinal, he called Rodrigo to Rome, along with a brother named Pedro Luís, his elder by a year. Rodrigo passed several terms at the University of Bologna, studying canon law and other subjects, and writing certain briefs in support of Papal claims to political authority, which won him standing at the Court of Rome as a "most eminent and very learned consult-at-law." As was the custom at the time, his uncle, the Cardinal, bestowed rich benefices upon him even while he was still a student, and he finally became Prothonotary of the Holy See.

Meantime, Juan de Mila, the son of another sister of Alfonso de Borja and cousin, therefore, to Rodrigo, was receiving the Bishopric of Segorbe in Spain. When the Cardinal of Valencia assumed the title of Pope as Calixtus the Third, the two cousins were both elevated to the Cardinalate; and the son of don Geoffrey became Cardinal-Deacon of Saint Nicholas *in Carcere Tuliana,* and successively, thereafter, Prefect of Rome, Governor of Spoleto, Legate to the March of Ancona, and finally Vice-Chancellor of the Church, the highest post within the gift of the Curia, which made the incumbent a sort of Vice-Pope.

Like all the Borjas, Rodrigo was "sturdy of parts, handsome of body, haughty of bearing, sensuous." Quite fittingly had a bull been chosen to adorn the escutcheon of the house! The historian Guicciardini, an implacable foe of Rodrigo de Borja, saw "conjoined in him rare prudence and vigilance, maturity of counsel, marvelous persuasiveness and shrewd capacity for managing most difficult matters."

Absorbed as he was in his war against the Turks, Calixtus the Third came to depend more and more upon the expertness

of this Cardinal barely twenty-six years old, and entrusted to him all the affairs of Rome and the Papal States. Writers of the time noted his attractive figure and his ardently sensuous inclinations, which seemed to exert irresistible charm over the other sex. Gasparo de Verona, a contemporary, wrote: "He is a handsome man, of frank, engaging countenance, sweet and ornate of address. With a single glance he inspires love in the ladies of the nobility in marvellous fashion, and draws them to himself more potently than a lodestone draws iron."

Ideas of physical attractiveness change with the times. Rodrigo de Borja possessed the manly graces in vogue in that era of fervent worship of everything Greek and Roman. He was tall, muscular, well-proportioned, with a native majesty in carriage and gesture. He had black eyes of piercing keenness, a dark complexion, a sensuous mouth with fulsome lips, a chin somewhat receding. As he grew older in years he thickened out; but obesity seemed to increase the impressiveness of his personality. More and more, in carnal exuberance and evident muscularity, he seemed to be the living incarnation of the symbol that pranced across the shield of his family—a red bull on a field of gold, fringed with eight tongues of fire, as though that bellicose animal were not of itself enough to express the fiery passions of the Borjas.

During his uncle's pontificate, the future Alexander the Sixth caused no particular gossip as to his wayward conduct. His bitterest enemies admit that much. He applied himself to his public duties with a seriousness quite out of keeping with his scant years. It was after the death of Calixtus the Third that Pius the Second, none other than the celebrated humanist, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, felt called upon to extend to him a first mild reproof, for certain entertainments he arranged in gardens belonging to a friend in honor of the ladies of Siena.

Claudio knew that story of old, and he was equally well informed as to youthful escapades of the novelist, Aeneas Silvius, who was later to ascend the Papal throne as Pius the Second. He remarked with a smile:

"You probably remember the adage, uncle: 'Preaching good examples consoles old age for its inability to set bad examples.'"

The pious Canon pretended not to heed and resumed his lecture:

"The aged Calixtus was well aware of the noteworthy abilities, as jurist and man of affairs, which his nephew Rodrigo possessed. But the best of his affections went out to Rodrigo's elder brother, Pedro Luís, who had clung to the secular status. Pedro Luís was, if anything, more attractive than Rodrigo, perhaps from a certain dashing quality that came from his military trappings and the splendor of his manner of dressing. Without the remarkable intellectual endowments of the new Cardinal of Valencia—so people were now calling Rodrigo, as they had his uncle of old—he was a man of no ordinary talents. Within a few months after Alfonso de Borja became Pope, Pedro Luís became in his turn Captain-General of the Church, Governor of the Castle of Sant' Angelo, and Commander of all the Papal fortresses. The two nephews of the Pope had identified themselves with the Colonnas, rather than not, and there was public report that don Pedro Luís was considering marriage with a lady of the Colonna family. This naturally put the Borgias at odds with the Orsinis. However, the Pope and his two nephews were inclined to depend upon a following of their own, and they called to their court many of the friends they had in Spain.

"For that matter," added don Baltasar, "on news that a Spaniard had again ascended the throne of Saint Peter, numberless Spaniards came flocking to Rome. It was a veritable invasion, and all of them pretended to be relatives of the Borja family."

"That was the first Spanish invasion," said Claudio, smiling. "The second was to come under Alexander the Sixth; and then, there was the third and the most terrible—the sack of Rome by the armies of Charles the Fifth."

"Many of the Spaniards came in from the neighboring Kingdom of Naples, already half hispanized under Alfonso of Aragon. Others came directly from Spain. During those particular years," the Canon explained, "there was a period of hard times in the

Kingdom of Valencia because of a long protracted drought. The fields were burned brown. The Lake of Albufera all but dried out, and most of the plentiful fish it had harbored died. Anyone who could find passage in a galley sailed off to Italy, and others walked there afoot to seek protection and advancement from the two Valencians so prominent there, the one as King of Naples, the other as Pope of Rome. Numbers of ambitious priests came into the Eternal City from all parts of Spain, and great companies of unemployed soldiers gathered about don Pedro Luís, 'a violent man, endowed with all the knightly virtues.' For the Italians; these newcomers, whatever their origins, were all 'Catalans.' To appear as relatives of the Pope, those who had the family name of Borja somewhere among their numerous appellatives, dropped all the others and kept the Borja; with the result that the number of Borjas in Rome leapt to prodigious proportions.

"That was how the name came to be changed," Figueras continued. "It was easy for the Italians to identify the Spanish guttural with a sound of their own language, pronouncing Borja, 'Borscha' and writing it 'Borgia.' Shortly, all the Borjas who had come to Rome became Borgias for the rest of the world and even for themselves."

Though Calixtus the Third had little time to attend to matters not connected with his Crusade, he did take alarm at the rapid growth of his factitious family and at the ambitions which were appearing among his genuine relatives. He was shocked at the conduct of his sisters, and especially of doña Isabel, mother to Rodrigo and Pedro Luís, who kept trying to provide brilliant futures for her daughters by marrying them into noble houses in Spain with dowries largely paid from the treasury of Saint Peter. The Papal court, at any rate, was thoroughly hispanized. Germans and Frenchmen who had been holding high offices in the curia were dismissed and replaced with Spaniards. All the artists in the pontifical entourage were countrymen of the Pope, even the musicians and singers in his chapel choir. The aged Calixtus sent precious gifts to churches in Spain, in particular to

those in Valencia and Játiva. "In all the Holy City," says a chronicle of the time, "hardly anyone not a Catalan is to be found."

"As I said at the beginning," the Canon continued, "Rome had long been a center of corruption and gay life, full of adventurers, male and female, from all countries. This new importation of Spaniards, as grasping as they were proud, could only be the occasion for frequent quarrellings and brawls."

The Pope was now living in open hostility with his former patron, the King of Naples. He could not forget how Alfonso had betrayed him in his Crusade, pocketing the contributions and diverting the ships of the Church. Alfonso, for his part, could never think of Calixtus the Third except as the sometime rector of the parish of Saint Nicholas in Valencia, as the poor farmer's boy born in the "university" of Canals, as the secretary, at best, whom he had so long held at his beck and nod. He always thought of the Pope as one of his menials. But after all, it is the office that makes the man; and of all the offices that exist on earth none more greatly transforms and exalts a man than that of Supreme Pontiff. The moment Alfonso de Borja felt the tiara on his head, he could see in the King of Naples only an inferior monarch, who was, in fact, juridically his vassal, since the Church laid claim to the realm of Naples as one of its own fiefs, with power to make and unmake its rulers. During the days when Borja had been serving at Naples as legal adviser to the King, he had repeatedly urged his sovereign to pay homage to the Popes of those days as a feudatory of the Church.

"Things were at this pass when, in the summer of the year 1458, the plague broke out in Rome, and with such violence that all important people about the Court fled the city, except the aged Pope himself. Calixtus clung to the Vatican, especially because King Alfonso was seriously ill at the moment, and finally died at Naples on the twenty-seventh of June. Alfonso had no legitimate children. The realm of Aragon and the island of Sicily he left to his brother, don Juan the Second, father of Ferdinand the Catholic. But he considered the Kingdom of

Naples as his private property because he had conquered it with his sword. Feeling free to dispose of it as he chose, he willed it to one of his illegitimate children, Ferdinand, who had been born in Valencia. This disposition roused the Pope's anger. He could not recognize such a man as king. During his days as Alfonso's secretary he had conceived a contemptuous dislike for the bastard Ferdinand, born of a Valencian mother of no particular family (of her almost no trace has survived), and reared by an ordinary gentleman who lived in the *Calle de la Bolseria* in Valencia. Such the antecedents of the king who was later to be known to his Italian subjects as don Ferrante and to become the founder of the Aragonese dynasty in Naples. Speaking now as a practised jurist, Calixtus the Third proclaimed the realm of Naples an appurtenance of the Church and declared that no one could assume the crown without Papal approbation; and he could hardly contain himself when he learned that the Bastard had appeared in royal armor on the very day of his father's death and had traversed the streets of Naples to the acclaim of multitudes hailing him as 'King don Ferrante.'

"The aged Pope's expressed policy was to restore the crown to the French house which had been claiming it for centuries and was then represented by Duke Réné of Anjou and the latter's son, Jean."

"The yoke has been broken and at last we are free," cried the Pope on receiving news of Alfonso's death.

Most people thought, however, that the aged Borgia's real intention was to place his nephew, Pedro Luís, on the throne of Naples. Between such a young man and a bastard like don Ferrante, there could be no question in the Pope's mind. Aside from the matter of legitimacy of birth, he thought of his dashing nephew as a second Julius Cæsar and, as again his enemies assert, even dreamed of seeing him some day emperor at Constantinople or, at the very least, King of Cyprus; provided, of course, the crusade against the Turks succeeded in rescuing one or the other of those prizes for Christianity.

"Both the Borgia Popes," the Canon continued, "were obsessed

with the same dream; the dream of seeing one of the military laymen of the family ensconced on some throne. Calixtus the Third did his best to find a crown for Pedro Luís. Alexander the Sixth worked just as diligently to make, first his eldest son, the Duke of Gandia, and then his other son, Cæsar Borgia, princes of sovereign rank. The Popes of Rome always had to depend on some secular king with power enough to defend them, and for such protection always had to pay a costly price. The Borgias considered it a sounder and easier policy to create such a supporting monarchy within the bosom of their own family.

"'Calixtus divided his last days between the Crusade against the Turks and the Neapolitan succession. He issued a bull declaring 'the realm of Sicily hitherward from the beacon'—Naples, in other words, northward from the Straits of Messina—a vacant fief; and don Pedro Luís began marshalling an army for a hostile demonstration against the Neapolitan frontiers. The octogenarian in the Vatican described the young monarch, don Ferrante, as 'a little bastard whose father cannot be named with certainty, a boy who is nobody and is usurping the name of king without Our permission, since Naples is a property of the Church.' War between the Pope and the new King seemed imminent when Calixtus suddenly lost that wonderful stamina which had been the product of sheer will. He fell mortally sick and, foreseeing his early death, the plebs of Rome began to attack the so-called Catalans and there was frequent brawling about the streets of the city. The Pontiff, however, was to linger on during July and August, with sudden improvements and relapses which caused corresponding variations in the public mood. The old man himself was the last to believe in his passing. Almost to his final hour, he busied himself with his war on the Infidels. When Cardinal de Lacerda, a Spaniard, called on him to inform him that his physicians were alarmed and that he should think of his soul's salvation as befitted a Pontiff, he replied that he was by no means certain the end had yet come, that, in fact, he felt he would be continuing his tussle with the Grand Turk for many

years still. Determined to remain at the helm of the Church he gathered a Consistory about his sick bed to take action on two important matters of spiritual character which had held his interest all during his pontificate. He had decided to beatify the Master Preacher, Vincent Ferrer, who had predicted his ascent to the Holy See while he was still an infant.

"And then," added the Canon, "Pope Calixtus the Third was the first to pay worship to an Amazon of the Christian faith, a French girl who years before had been burned at Rouen as a witch by a tribunal of Bishops. Alfonso de Borja was the Pope who rehabilitated Joan of Arc and cleansed her name of the many slanders that had gathered about it. It was he who ordained the first ceremonies of sanctification which have been concluded only in our time, after a lapse of four hundred years.

"While Calixtus the Third was on his death-bed, Don Ferrante sent courageous emissaries from Naples to nail protests against the Papal claims on the very gates of Saint Peter, and threatened to start a revolution in Rome with the help of the Roman populace. A committee of Cardinals had taken charge of policing the city, after coming to an understanding with don Pedro Luís. This was much more easily done than would have been thought possible in view of his well known arrogance and ambition. The fact was that Rodrigo de Borja had urged prudence upon his brother, pointing out the dangers of his continued residence in Rome. Thanks to this advice, don Pedro Luís handed over all the fortresses of the Church, including the Castle of Sant' Angelo, and the Italian and Spanish mercenaries under his command swore fidelity to the Sacred College without any knowledge of the proceedings reaching the ears of the Pope—Calixtus still had no thought of dying. The Cardinals also took charge of the Church treasure, which was found to contain 120,000 ducats."

Meantime, the Orsinis, who were hostile to the Borgias, thought they could be rid of don Pedro Luís once and for all by cutting off his retreat by land and sea. But the Sacred College had a number of Cardinals favorable to Calixtus and they took measures to save the life of the Pope's nephew. One of them was the cele-

brated Humanist, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, on whom the aged pontiff had just previously bestowed a red hat, in spite of his notoriously free manner of living. Pietro Barbo, another Cardinal who was to become Pope under the name of Paul the Second, took even greater risks of incurring the wrath of the Orsinis in defense of don Pedro Luís. It was he, in company with Rodrigo de Borja, who organized the young man's flight.

Some hours before daylight, on the morning of August sixth, the Cardinals Barbo and Borgia rode forth from the gate of the Castle of Sant' Angelo toward the *Ponte Molle,* at the head of three hundred horse and two hundred foot soldiers. In this company, disguised as an individual of no importance, rode the man who had shortly before been Captain-General of the Church. Leaving the city through one gate, the company re-entered through the *Porta del Popolo* and advancing quietly through the deserted streets while the inhabitants were still asleep, they again issued from the walls by the *Porta di San Paolo.* This strange manoeuvre had been arranged to set the would-be assassins of the General on the wrong track. They could be relied upon to gallop away in pursuit along the road across the *Ponte Molle.*

"Outside the gate of Saint Paul the Cardinals Barbo and Borgia entrusted Don Pedro Luís to an escort which would accompany him to Ostia. There he would find a galley waiting; and, in fact, his baggage and his treasure had been put aboard two days before. However, when the soldiers in the escort learned what was expected of them they thought it dangerous to interfere in the fortunes of this powerful personage who had fallen on evil days, and they began to desert. In the end, not a single rider remained. Don Pedro Luís made his way to Ostia absolutely alone, but without encountering adventure. However, the galley which had been hired for his use was not to be found. It had sailed away with his baggage and his treasure. He did manage to secure an open boat and make Civita Vecchia. He took refuge in the fortress of that port and was to die there within six months, perhaps as a consequence of the privations and excitements he had suffered during his flight.

"In these very same circumstances, Cardinal Rodrigo played a much bolder game than his brother. He had been living in Tivoli since early June, leaving the city, as most Romans had done, to escape the deadly contagion. But on learning of his uncle's condition he returned intrepidly to Rome, and took up his post at the bedside of the dying Pontiff. At the time the Roman populace was in a fury against all Catalans. Borgia's own palace had been attacked and plundered and mobs were marching up and down the streets calling death to the Cardinal of Valencia. Don Rodrigo did not flinch nor alter his conduct in the slightest. After arranging for his brother's flight and bidding him farewell at the gates outside the walls of Rome, he might have returned to his tranquil residence in Tivoli. But unwilling to allow his uncle to die alone, he rode boldly back into the city and traversed the main streets until he reached the Vatican, where he fell on his knees in prayer at his uncle's bedside. While he was thus hurling contemptuous defiance at his foes, Cardinal Barbo was galloping away in flight, pursued by the bands of the Orsinis, who were vowing to cut his body to bits for his participation in the escape of Don Pedro Luís.

"Tranquil valor," concluded the Canon, "a quiet and ever unruffled courage, was the distinctive trait of Rodrigo Borgia. His bitterest critics never dared call him a coward. Never for a second in the course of his whole life did he play false, in this matter of courage, to the red bull on his family escutcheon. On two occasions he risked death at sea on the Mediterranean; and experienced sailors whose faces paled before the fury of a storm which had lasted for days could only gaze in astonishment upon the smiling calm of this Prince of the Church."

CHAPTER V

"Goddess, I Love Thee—Let Me Depart"

CLAUDIO had passed years of his life without feeling any particular need of seeing his uncle. Don Baltasar had been just an attractive memory of his youth drifting across his mind from time to time. Their tastes and characters were different. There had been no intimate personal connection between them. But now, when the Valencian Canon had disappeared, the young man seemed to feel, as he said, a great void in his life. Less than a week had been enough to accustom him to the Canon's presence and make his company and conversation part of a comfortable routine. What a relief, indeed, those long talks in Spanish! Claudio would now see day after day go by without his hearing a syllable in his native tongue save for some exchange with Rosaura; though with her he was quite as likely to talk in French, especially if any of her friends were present. Those "chats" with the erudite cleric had been formidable things, in truth, veritable lectures on historical research, or disquisitions equally learned on one aspect or another of Spanish life! But Figueras had brought back something that Claudio had almost forgotten: his old home, his distant country! It was like an unexpected, almost tender, encounter. He had always been fond of don Baltasar—a sort of filial affection modified perhaps by a certain smiling condescension toward his simpleness of heart and his academic enthusiasms. But in the colorless cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Blue Coast that innocent bookworm was the symbol of Claudio's whole past, a reminder of forgotten dreams of boyhood which left an abiding homesickness when it was gone.

The days of conversation in Spanish with don Baltasar seemed for one thing to have refreshed the springs of Claudio's mental activity. He was thinking again; and the consciousness of doing so gave him a feeling of definite superiority over the frivolous people he met every day. As he lay in bed at night he would

find himself composing verses, as he had done in the bubbling, credulous years of his youth. There could be no doubt about it: Figueras—who would ever have suspected such a thing?—had brought him back to himself; and he felt an impelling desire to go off in pursuit of the old man. The lectures of the defender of the Borgias seemed to have clothed all sorts of figures, lost in Claudio's memory, with their own vividness, endowing impalpable phantoms from his past life with a new plasticity of flesh and bone. Off there in Rome, the pompous Ambassador of Spain, don Aristides Bustamante; his fat sister-in-law, doña Natí; and the majestic Enciso de las Casas, the foremost artist in the South American diplomatic corps! Stella? Stella Bustamante was no longer just a plain insipid doll sitting in a line of other lifeless figures! Her gentle insignificance now seemed to re-acquire its mystic enchantment. She was more like Tannhäuser's Elizabeth, a tolerant, forgiving Elizabeth, disposed to pardon the sinful poet who had deserted her to prostrate himself at the feet of Venus!

How monotonous the happiness in which he was living! His life with Rosaura seemed a contemptible thing, with none of those shocks that rouse the energies of a man, good or evil, as they may be. All this rose-tinted elegance! How it made him yawn! As he awoke each morning and thought of all the assemblies, *fiestas,* or concerts, he would have to attend with Rosaura, he felt almost as weary as he had when he went to bed. The happy *blasé* people about him took it for granted that he was like them! They never dreamed that he had aspirations and ambitions that rose high above the material plane on which they moved! And so he would go on—who could say for how long?—go on living in slavery to a love which had satisfied all his illusions, and was now beginning to wear upon his spirit with the oppressiveness inevitable in anything which can never give us the surprise of a morrow entirely new.

He could not complain of Rosaura. She was a little distraught, somewhat irresponsible at the worst—the effect doubtless of her busy life in a gay society. She looked at love differently, that was all. She did not know the meaning of jealous, passionate exclusiveness! She took certain liberties with the men of their

social group, but in a playful thoughtless spirit; and then later on, when alone with Claudio, she would manifest all the tenderness of their first months together, perhaps indeed a deeper, quieter, richer passion. They had followed the same pathway of love side by side, but out of step, as it were. He had loved most vehemently at first, at a time when she had been conscious of many reserves, viewing him with instinctive uneasiness as though she were afraid of going too far.

"A woman," Borgia remarked, "is always in doubt at first when a man is all on fire; but then she gains confidence and abandons herself utterly, coming blindly to believe in a man at the moment when his passions are cooling, whether as an effect of assured and monotonous possession, or, perhaps, because the first vanity of triumph is wearing off."

He had to admit that his own temperature was falling, as though caught by a strange gravitational force. Sometimes as he examined his conscience uneasily he would feel as though he were doing Rosaura a wrong. Had he ceased to love her so soon? But then straightway a passionate affirmation would apply the balm. Yes, he loved her as he had always loved her; but he could not endure that frivolous, however select, environment apart from which she could not live! He was beginning to look with approval on a custom he had observed in a number of English and American couples he had known in Paris and on the Blue Coast. They loved each other; but they understood that a passion cannot endure the strain of long-extended monotony, that it needs the refreshment of occasional separation. Every year those husbands and wives would leave each other, the ones staying in Europe, the others going off to America or around the world. Meantime they would exchange letters as ardent as in the days of their courtship; and then after weeks or months they would come together again with all the illusions and enthusiasms of a new honeymoon. Wouldn't that be a good idea for him and Rosaura? As he saw it, modern enjoyments were organized as crudely as in prehistoric times, lacking rational and prudent guidance. The eternal permanence of true love seemed to be taken for granted as some undebatable dogma; yet, as everybody knows, if there is

any joy in life, it is because of a yearning for perpetual change that attends us to the day of our death!

How surprised the pious Figueras would have been had he realized how deeply he had stirred his nephew's inner life, bringing Claudio back to the fitful and ardent restlessness of his boyhood. Borja belonged, in very truth, to the race of the eternally dissatisfied. He was, indeed, a Faust, rushing in panting eagerness from desire to satisfaction and in satiety striving for a new desire. He was Tannhäuser to whom Rosaura often compared him in hours of intimate affection. He could feel in himself an insatiate hunger for all the unexperienced possibilities that life holds. He went forward in constant doubt and hesitation, tempted on every hand by the most varied things. Whatever destiny has given in heritage to men, he was eager to treasure in his own life. In recent months, surely, he had enjoyed all the satisfactions of sense that a man could possibly enjoy. Yet that was not enough for his restless soul. His nature demanded something else: incessant change, new scenes, new landscapes for new sentimental excursions; new faces, new prospects of happiness untasted—old pleasures, indeed, forgotten joys that would come back to him under some new semblance. He was the poet Tannhäuser dozing at the feet of Venus, lifting his head from her divine knees, deaf to the songs of the Sirens and Cupids, enchanted by the distant tinkling of the Christian church bell he had heard in his boyhood! He epitomized in his life the eternal restlessness of men, which can find repose only in the embrace of death. The satisfactions of sense were not true satisfactions. He had to go on, on, farther on, ever pursuing a happiness that receded before him as enchanted palaces in the legends recede before the weary traveller. This placid voluptuousness had brought him to realize that love cannot be the principal objective in life. Life is freedom, freedom in struggle. Life is activity. It demands effort and pain. Hitherto he had been a man of desire; now he yearned to be a man of action. He felt ashamed that his youth had never known suffering, tears, danger, combat. Why had he come into the world? In his spirit there

glowed a flickering continuous flame that burned like a lamp of everlasting oil. But of what avail was that to be to other human beings? What trace would be left of his passage through this world, if he lived there always at the feet of Venus?

Impetuous desires were stirring deep within him, bringing him to frank abhorrence of his present state. These new feelings he did not try to understand. Why analyze such spontaneous impulses of his spirit? It was useless to philosophize. Thought was repugnant to men like him. It was their lot in life to follow their impulses—impulses that came now from the heart, and now from the senses. He must do without Rosaura for a time! He loved her truly, and shortly he would return to her rejuvenated, with a new passion of springtime kindled by absence! He must leave the *Venusberg,* go forth among men again, take part in their struggles and their worries. He could not sleep forever there, at the feet of the goddess, like an enchanted cavalier. He ought to write something, connect in some way with other human beings, give them some spark of his own feverish thought, reflect like some opaque planet the light kindled on other spheres!

The inner torment provoked by the fleeting visit of the Spanish Canon began to show itself in Claudio's outward demeanor. He seemed preoccupied, absorbed. Normally of a complaisant, tolerant disposition, he now had moments of strange and quite unreasonable irritableness. He began to avoid Rosaura, inventing excuses not to attend her on her flights to Cannes, Nice, Monte Carlo; and afterwards, without plausible cause, he would have bursts of jealousy, imputing to her intimacies and coquetries with the men she met, taking advantage of his absence, during such diversions.

"But it was you!" Rosaura would protest. "You refused to come with me!"

Nervous, irritated, petulant, Claudio would persist in his unjust complaints. And shortly he observed that Rosaura, in her turn, was gazing at him with a strange questioning in her eyes, as though her dark deep pupils were harboring a perplexed

astonishment at the discovery of unexpected thoughts in her lover's mind. Now it was she who sat silent for long periods when they were together in their daily companionship, following him with wondering glances whenever he turned his back to leave the room. And sometimes, after such periods of unexpressed meditation, she would shake her head and a bitter smile would form about her lips. She could see something in the offing that caused her a twinge of pain. But it would be only for a flash; for straightway the painful thought would take wing as though on the black pinions of a frightened bat: "Too old for him . . . too young for me!"

Why had she ever embarked on this tumultuous and uncertain passion, when life was offering her in other directions so many easy and deliciously varied satisfactions, when she could see herself worshipped like the unjust and cold-blooded idol that never lacks fanatics before its pedestal? Rosaura had lived, and she knew life. She knew the risks a woman takes in casting her lot with the love of a man's first youth, which is ever beset with strange yearnings for what lies beyond. For a boy in his early twenties, Venus, freshly risen from the foam of the sea, is only the joy of the moment, the triumph of the present day. In the life of a man that credulous age is the age of hope, a hope always attended by ingratitude: "How beautiful! But tomorrow, something better perhaps!" Only the man of full maturity knows the true value of today and takes advantage of it with thankfulness for his present fortune: "Thank heaven for this great happiness, and let us try not to lose it!" A submissive, grateful passion of the latter sort was what Rosaura needed!

In the end, Claudio's continued moodiness, and his causeless jealousies followed by periods of absence which she interpreted as slights, became intolerable to her. Now he was almost never to be seen in her company at the teas and balls. He rarely came to escort her home from the Casino; and her friends would report having seen him walking, instead, all by himself along the shore. At other times he would appear in the evening weary and dusty from long tramps in the Alps which he had under-

taken for no reason at all. It was clear that the moment for an understanding was fast approaching.

Pride was as keen and violent a sentiment in Rosaura as sensuousness itself. That passive adoration made up of sacrifice and voluntary self-effacement which came naturally to some women had no place in her temperament. The slights, as she called them, which she was receiving from Claudio were moving her toward aggressive resentment.

It was she who provoked the discussion. That day she had invented a headache to excuse her decision not to go out. She elected to spend the afternoon in her garden, sunk deep in a wicker chair among gay-colored cushions on the topmost terrace of the stairway of flowering esplanades that reached down to the rocks on the shore. Sunset was approaching. The Mediterranean stretched away to the horizon like an infinite liquid plain with not a boat, not a wave, not a curl of smoke, to break the expanse of mother-of-pearl that glittered under the dying sun with all the colors of the rainbow. Behind rose the Alps, their greenish-yellow peaks crowned with turbans of white cotton that seemed to have soaked up the blood of the sunset. There was something heavy and inert about the air. The languid calm that seemed to hang over a world suffused with pale rose was like the exhaustion, so sweet and yet so garish from its very dearth of dreams, that follows on great expansions of passion.

Claudio was sitting on a wicker stool at Rosaura's feet, his head lowered, his brow wrinkled in a frown, foreseeing the imminence of a quarrel that he both feared and desired. For some time they sat in silence, puffing nervously at their cigarettes. The light perfume of opium banished the butterflies and colored insects from that particular area of honeyed atmosphere that belonged to them alone at other hours of the day.

Suddenly Rosaura exclaimed in a tone of decision:

"What's the matter with you? What is on your mind? You have been different for sometime now. You know, with me you can be absolutely frank. There is nothing between us that cannot be removed. Tell me frankly—are you tired of me?"

Claudio stammered, as though unable to find the words that would conceal his thought. Finally, without raising his head, he managed to murmur:

"All this time we have been here . . . I know it is only a year. It is as though it were a lifetime! One day just like another—a dead level, without struggle, without ambition! It is true—my life has never known suffering; it has never known what winter is. The trouble is . . . it cannot know joy either: it cannot know springtime. . . ."

Rosaura smiled ironically, holding her lover mercilessly under her gaze. He still sat with lowered head, not finding the courage to look up at her.

"Supposing we dispense with figures of speech!" she said. "Tell me the whole truth. . . . You are tired of me?"

Borja now looked up and met her gaze. He had recovered from the indecision that spelled unwillingness to tell the truth. His words rang with a warm sincerity:

"No! I love you as I always have, as I always will; and with my passion goes an immense gratitude. You have given me a happiness I would never have believed possible. Your love has lifted me to the plane of the gods. You might have chosen among the most famous men of the world. One glance of yours would have brought them all to your feet in eager rivalry: and yet, you deigned in your mercy to look down upon me, lifting my humble person to the heights of your beauty."

He fell silent a moment. There was a puzzled expression in her eyes. She seemed unable to harmonize his passionate words with the discouragement evident in his whole demeanor. He went on as if in excuse of himself:

"You are worthy of a god, a hero. I am only a mortal, with a mortal's weakness—and a mortal's heart is a changing thing. The happiness I feel at your side is too great for me. It is one vast Olympian serenity . . . it is absolute peace! Perhaps what I need is struggle, suffering. I must speak as the poet spoke in the delights of the *Venusberg:* 'Goddess, I love thee—let me depart!' "

Rosaura looked at him ironically. There was something hard in her voice:

"In plain language—you are tired of me! I have done my best to fill your life with joy. You repay me with contempt and you are trying to conceal it under pretty words. Well—that is my punishment for my weakness! Who could ever have dreamed that any man would be insolent enough to desert me, when so many have sought me?"

Claudio hastened to correct her misapprehension:

"The man on whom you bestow the regal alms of your love will always be a happy man: he will know the most entrancing of intoxications: he will know transports of joy such as only the gods have tasted. The happiness you give far transcends the joy dispensed by other women. Only the man whom you have glorified with your love can appreciate the real power of a woman's charm. All the pleasures I may meet in this world, during the years I still have to live, will be nothing as compared with the least I have known in your arms."

He checked his rhetoric and added in a tone of dejected apology:

"But there is something in me which is pulling me towards a far-off goal. I cannot resist its violence. It is a yearning for absolute freedom, for a poor and modest manner of living, for a life of studious, productive privacy. I want to be someone. I want to have a purpose in living. I need to work. I need to aspire to something. Here I have everything. I must escape from this happy enchantment. Oh, I will come back! I will come back some day repentant, to implore your forgiveness, and you will treat me as you choose. But now I can only say what I said before: 'Rosaura, I love thee; let me depart!'"

Again Rosaura seemed puzzled. This combination of utter passion and resolute desertion was beyond her comprehension.

"I believe you have lost your mind," she said at last. "For some days I have been observing that your words say one thing and your conduct another."

And jealousy flashed in her voice and in her eyes:

"I dare say I have lost my charms for you. Doubtless you have succumbed to some one of my friends, to one of those painted beauties with long and exciting histories, who go flitting here and there along the Shore . . . and you do that to me! . . ."

But Claudio would not let her finish. Passionately he seized her two hands and was drawing her toward him as though to kiss her lips. But she avoided the caress, still hurt.

"No, Rosaura," he pleaded. "You were never so beautiful as you are now! I love you! I love you only! But please, please! Let me go away!"

There was a ring of such sincerity in his words that her fears were allayed. She looked up at him with beseeching eyes:

"But I cannot let you go away! Oh, how could I! I have never given you cause for complaint by anything I did. I have always been true to you. A word of yours, a frown of annoyance, have always been enough to bend me to your will, bring me to satisfying all the demands of your capricious and unfounded jealousies. It has been my pride never to obey a man. Yet I have always obeyed you. What is lacking in me? Here you have been living for a year in one of the most beautiful spots on earth. You have been enjoying a tranquil carefree manner of living, such as anyone would envy. You have a woman who loves you. Why not drift along in the arms of this blessedness? What more do you want?"

The woman ordinarily so light and frivolous was now earnestness itself. Her eyes kindled with a tenderer light:

"I, too, Claudio, have often thought of our future. Don't imagine that I am altogether a matter of jewels and pretty gowns, tea-parties and dinners. Loving you has brought me to reflect on more serious things. I have been 'going *bourgeoise,*' as you would say. How often have I said to myself: 'Two years, perhaps three? Just enough to have my fill of this existence which is not to his liking! Then when amusement has lost its charms for me, we will regularize our situation: we will marry. I will become Señora de Borja and try to look younger, so that people will not notice the difference in our ages. Then we will

live a life of earnest and more peaceful devotion—journeys to distant countries, perhaps around the world, to come back here, when we are old, to this garden, which will then no longer be a *Venusberg* of burning desires, but one of those Grecian landscapes of which my Claudio talks, one of those retreats in which those old-time philosophers used to meditate on the enduring felicities of life and find consolation for the unavoidable proximity of the tomb.' That is the way I thought many times! That's the way we may end our lives, if we choose, with a certain serene majesty. But, for the moment, we are still young. We have still years of youth and passion before us, years of divine transports, as you would say, in which the dream is almost as good as the reality. And just when I am making plans for this future happiness, just now when I am doing all I can to preserve our present happiness, you begin talking . . . of going away!"

Claudio had again dropped his head as though he were unable to endure the caress in her eyes. Then, in a half-whisper, as though he were making a confession, he began:

"Oh, I shall never forget these days of our love. It has been only a year; yet it seems to me as great and as grand as an era in human history. In any moment of sadness that may come to me I shall have to think only of these days at your side, the only days that have been worth while in my whole life; and the fire of this divine intoxication will at once come back to me. If some day I feel old, a thought of you will be enough to restore my youth. A man who has drunk at the fountain of your love will never find any other water sufficient to quench his thirst."

But then, leaping for the third time from the enthusiasm of the past to the despondency of the present, he added humbly:

"Insult me, I indeed deserve it; despise me for my lack of will; but let me go away. This perpetual happiness I am enjoying here is a sort of slavery. Freedom is now my only desire. I blush for shame as I think of how you have wasted yourself on me. I know myself only too well. I am an ungrateful wretch, a worthless good-for-nothing. But for your own good I repeat my prayer: 'Goddess, I love thee, let me depart!' "

A frown had gathered about Rosaura's eyes. Stamping nervously with one foot, she interrupted harshly:

"Well, go away, if that is your whim! Don't let me interfere with your future! Free? You are free! I agree with you: you do not deserve the life you have been living here! Your tastes are, in truth, commonplace. You really are one of those men who need to elbow their way through life, scrambling for money or renown. A life of vulgar struggle is what you need. This idle bliss that I have given you is only for people born to enjoy it. It is a torment for men like you. You cannot adapt yourself to the leisure which belongs to us who have had our stations in life won for us through the efforts of others. Go back to the life you used to live in Madrid. You have described it to me many times—a life of unproductive efforts, petty ambitions, miserable jealousies, tempests in a teapot, in hopes sometime of seeing a sheet of printed paper soiled with your name! Go back to your uncle, that parson from Valencia, and talk of dead pedantries that are of interest to no one. Or better yet, why not go to Rome where you will find don Aristides and Stella—that poor little simpleton, with whom doubtless you are in love? Why, how can I have been so blind to it all this time? Why don't you marry the girl? She is just the woman for a man like you. And you will have a flock of children there in some apartment in Madrid, about as big as a bird-cage! Why don't you tell me the truth? . . . Oh, what a coward! What a coward!"

Claudio protested more in demeanor than in the words. Stella Bustamante, he stammered, had never entered his thoughts. He was surprised that Rosaura had even remembered her.

"No excuses, please! They will do no good!" Rosaura continued vehemently. "You say you have forgotten her, and perhaps you are sincere. But we women know more about such things than you men. She is the real cause of your estrangement from me!"

"The poor man!" she resumed, a second later, deepening the sarcasm in her tone. "He is bored with being loved by a lady!

He needs his little *bourgeoise,* bashful and stupid! Oh, my Lord Tannhäuser, I know you better than you know yourself! You are not big enough to love Venus, as you have called me many times. You need your Elizabeth—that poor child who is living down there in Rome, with her great booby of a father! . . . Well, go and try to find the peace you are talking about! But you will never find it. There is no freedom for anyone in that vulgar world for which you are now hungering, though you have often ridiculed it in my presence in moments when you felt yourself of a higher breed."

She sat silent a moment. Then she added in tone of menace:

"Oh, but I do know you! I can just see you coming back to me after the sad experience that awaits you. I can just see you bored by the commonness of those common people. You will feel the need of the true freedom which belongs only to our tolerant and happy world. You may even mourn the absence of my beauty and my voice! And then? Why then, I will repel you as though you were an annoying beggar who still persists after a refusal of alms. Go if you wish! But let it be forever! Never come back here! For I assure you, you will not find me!"

Claudio sat crushed before her angry haughtiness. He shook his head:

"I will not come back. I will spare you the cruel pleasure of rebuffing your beggar."

There was a long silence. Now it was Rosaura who sat with lowered head, torn between impulses of pride and the tenderer counsel of her love. Twice she looked up at the humbled lover who sat before her, the rose-tinted glow of the sunset gleaming in her tearful eyes. Finally she said with an endearing softness:

"Claudio, please forget what I just said. How could I ever rebuff you? What a stupid threat! Why make ourselves so unhappy at a mere caprice of yours? But don't leave me! Stay here! See how happy you will find the life it is our privilege to enjoy! I believe don Baltasar is responsible for all this. He is an excellent person, but he has upset you without realizing what he was doing. Abandon yourself to life! Have the courage

to be selfish: it harms no one and it happens to make me very happy! The world will get along pretty well, whether you bother with it or not. Believe me, whether you dance out the rest of your life or write a dry volume or two, things will remain very much as they were before. Just think of yourself! And think a little of me!"

Then she added, smiling with forced attention:

"Does it matter much whether a few hundred people here or in Paris think of you as a great brain or simply as a man of fashion? What is their opinion worth? You will be happier here in a life without annoyance and without jealousies. . . ."

But Claudio remained insensitive to her imploring smile. To the supplication written in her eyes he replied stubbornly:

"I must do something in life, and the moment for deciding has come. Stay here forever? Your real man may love a woman but he will not let himself be absorbed by her. What am I after all? Just your slave! A bird you keep in a cage for your amusement—a gilded cage, I admit, but a prison after all. Don't impute to me jealousies and suspicions I am not guilty of, nor feelings I have never felt. If I am going away it is not in pursuit of some new diversion. Your love has been so great that I have no desire to know any other. No, it is just the toil and turmoil of a free life that are calling to me. Work—work with all its annoyances and its fatigues—is for me a happiness I have never known. Let me go away. I will come back, if you wish, after a time. This may be our only separation. After it we can resume our life together and make it as beautiful and as wonderful as you have just described."

Rosaura sat back in her chair and looked at him in silence for a long time, doubtless without seeing him, absorbed as she was in her own thoughts. Then she said, with a coldness that chilled them both:

"Yes, go away! Be free in the way you say. If you need that to be happy—be it so! But remember—I have warned you! You are making a mistake! When you come back, if you do come back, I cannot tell about myself. I do not know whether I shall

care to see you. We must leave that matter open. Time has no significance for people placed as we are. We may have forgotten each other a few days hence. Or, perhaps, on the other hand, who can say? A hunger beyond our control may drive us towards each other again, regardless of humiliations and abjections. For the moment, I repeat, you are making a mistake. It is always a mistake to trifle with love. Experiments, separations, are dangerous. Youth does not live on memories alone. Lovers who try to live without each other are in gravest danger."

PART TWO

THE RED BULL

THE RED BULL

CHAPTER I

Cicero's Daughter

SO far as Claudio Borja could see, Enciso de las Casas had not changed much in the years that had passed since he first appeared as a lecturer at the *Athenæum* at Madrid, the left half of his frock-coat blazing with a museum of decorations from the Pope and all the Empires then existing in Europe. The illustrious South American showed a trace of gray in his reddish beard, and his scalp was, if anything, more white and more polished than ever. There was still the line of red around the edges of his eyelids, which seemed to oblige him to close and open them rapidly, as he spoke, with a sort of nervous tic.

But, on settling in Rome after eight months of wandering, Borja began to find the man's intimacy quite worth while. Appreciating him at his true worth to begin with, Borja did not need to echo the gibes and jests of the many who partook of the ostentatious hospitality of Enciso de las Casas, only to ridicule him afterwards for his feverish literary activities. Borja did not read the sumptuously bound and printed volumes which the diplomat gave him, with grandiloquent dedications to the "most eminent of Spanish poets." He did not even cut their pages. He was not interested in retraversing superficial descriptions of the Italian Renaissance such as had become familiar to him in his days at school. Yet he could honestly say that this volunteer diplomat so avid of worldly distinction was an amiable, tolerant, thoroughly excellent person, with a love of learning and a respect for the achievements of others that placed him far above the majority of the parasites and so-called "friends" who gathered about him—

backward, lazy people of vulgar tastes, timid in the presence of new ideas, ever thinking in old and well-worn ruts.

Borja thought Enciso drew a fine portrait of himself in a remark he once made that he would have been willing to give up everything he owned in America and Europe—his coffee plantations, his sugar refinery, the palace he had bought in Rome, perhaps even his wife and children—could he have been, in exchange, a Prince of the Church of the Fifteenth or Sixteenth centuries—the period when he would have preferred to have lived.

The palace in question was a subject of pitying mirth for many envious individuals who frequented Enciso's banquets. A shrewd business man at home in South America, Enciso himself soon divined that he had been mercilessly plucked by a number of aristocrats—among them a Roman princess—whom he had trusted as his advisors in the purchase of the building. But that did not diminish the pride he felt in owning such a monument. He esteemed it a great historic treasure inasmuch as it had been built by a nephew—some said quite bluntly, by a son—of a Pope of the Eighteenth century. As for the interior, the honorary diplomat had a certain talent for decoration. He had imported a number of antique altars from churches in Spain. The walls were overladen with tapestries, columns, sheathings with tarnished gold-leaf carvings, paintings of cadaverous saints or fat polychrome angels, *précieux* landscapes or mythological nudes from the *grand siècle,* Byzantine virgins on backgrounds of gold, or agonized Christs, alternating with naked Venuses. Stands of vari-colored marble were strewn with little boxes inlaid with mother-of-pearl. There were wooden partitions of modern make but peppered with charges of birdshot or salt fired from pistols, to imitate worm-holes. The chairs were all of monastic design, upholstered in red leather with great brass nails. Enciso de las Casas meant it when he said he felt like a Cardinal of the Renaissance come to life again beyond the Atlantic!

The diplomat was inclined to boast of his Spanish-American origins, which he regarded as the loftiest and most interesting of nobilities. Only the ancient lineages of some of the Roman

houses were comparable to his. His optimistic patriotism as a Spanish colonial flattered Claudio and at the same time amused him. According to Enciso, all the Spaniards who moved to America in the early centuries were, without exception, younger sons of great families, gentlemen of high birth and heroic traditions—the pick of the Spanish race, as he put it. Modesty alone prevented him from adding that of all the select aristocrats who had emigrated across the Ocean those who bore his family name were the best and noblest. His faith in the noble ancestry of the colonists in the New World—as though not a jail-bird, nor even a commoner, was to be found among them—inclined him to a sentimental regard for all Spaniards who approached him. The greater his esteem for Spain, the more exaggerated the hyperboles which he bestowed on Spanish history, the greater the lustre he thought he was shedding on his own ancestry and on the name, doubly famous through birth and learning, which he would transmit to his daughters.

Claudio had a twin virtue in Enciso's eyes: as a Spaniard, and as a Borgia. One of the man's fads was to look up the genealogy of all his friends. For that purpose he had filled his library with books and documents, and sought numberless transcriptions of others from the "Kings of Arms," so-called, in Madrid, the ultimate authorities, as he believed, in everything touching the "science" of heraldry.

"Why," he would say to Claudio, "you come from a great historic family, an ancestry which I would be glad to have myself, were I not satisfied with my own descent from those Spanish noblemen who crossed the seas as Conquistadores. You derive from the Papal aristocracy. A great family, the Borgias! I have often been tempted to write a book about them myself. Your uncle, don Baltasar, when he was here recently, also thought I was the man to do it—but after all, a fellow has only one life! Your people began to be important in the world with Pope Calixtus the Third, and they finished, a century later, by giving a great saint to the Church—Francis, fourth Duke of Gandia, a cultivated gentleman who became a Jesuit and was at last beati-

fied as St. Francis de Borja. Not a man among them but showed courage, energy, or, as we say, personality. But just imagine a man like Cæsar Borgia, and another like the St. Francis in question, coming from the same line within a few decades of each other! Some of the Borgias were heroes, others saints, others terrible sinners—but everyone of them was interesting and remarkable in some way or other."

Encisco summed it all up by remarking one day, with the condescension of a master addressing a pupil:

"My dear Claudio, you are a young man just beginning your career. You have your whole time free. You ought to write a book about those ancestors of yours who are so grievously slandered and so badly understood."

But Claudio took the suggestion calmly enough. Work? Write? For eight months now he had been living in idleness, going about from place to place with the uneasy hopefulness of the invalid who moves from resort to resort in search of a cure he never finds. He was alone, entirely free, absolute master of his person! But of what use the freedom he had conquered?

On leaving the Blue Coast he had gone to Madrid. It was a virtual flight with no other farewell than a terse note. The night before he had talked with her calmly. They had continued seeing each other for a time, though never able quite to forget the half-quarrel of that afternoon on the upper terrace in the garden, looking out over the sea under the glow of sunset. Both felt the separation inevitable, yet they kept postponing it from day to day. At last Claudio stepped aboard a train, leaving a letter on his table with a request that it be delivered at Señora de Pineda's villa. His flight was the unwitting counterpart of her departure from Marseilles the year before!

On reaching Madrid he had considered himself freed forever from what he called "slavery in golden chains." He felt, in that familiar environment, as though he had quite erased the interval of his absence. It was as though he had never gone to Avignon. In the end he might forget even those last months of his life. Here was his old room in his old hotel; here were his old

friends, here the resorts he had frequented of yore with his boyhood companions; the same arguments, the same quarrels, the same jealousies, between young men who were compelled to see each other every day, as though life were impossible without such contacts and combats. Again he found himself besieged by the same bohemians, who begged and borrowed as they had before, treating him with the deference or the contempt which they severally bestowed upon wealthy dabblers in literature.

He had chosen Madrid because he thought that environment would supply an effective antidote to the despair within him. Yet memories of Rosaura came forward to greet him at almost every step. Here, for example, in the Salamanca quarter, was the residence where Bustamante had lived in those days. It was now occupied by strangers; for doña Natí had thought it wiser to surrender the lease on the theory that her brother-in-law would hold his post in Rome forever. In that building he had met Rosaura for the first time! All the details of the dinner in her honor were painfully fresh in his mind—the dazzling charm she exercised over the men, the envious admiration of the women. So that street was barred to him if he were to avoid a rush of disconcerting recollections of the past! Images he had never before remarked during his months with her came up in his mind among these familiar scenes. Here was a spot on the *Paseo de la Castellana,* where he had seen her riding in a car one day. And here was a shop on the *Carrera de San Jerónimo.* He had observed a crowd of men in front of it one day. They were gazing in and jesting salaciously upon a most attractive woman who had left her car at the curb and entered. It was the beautiful South American widow, who could never appear in public without exciting a half-riot of curiosity and male desire.

"I shall get over this!" Borja kept saying to himself. "I have not been away so very long as yet. When I get at my work, all this will vanish from my mind like so much smoke."

And he did set to work organizing his studies, as he would have set about a cure. He rented a house on the outskirts of Madrid, gathering into it all the books and furniture which at

one time or another he had distributed among his friends for safe keeping. Flaming with sudden enthusiasm he thought of a number of volumes he could write, any one of which might easily be famous—an epic poem on Pope Luna, recounting the latter's adventures on land and sea; a novel or two, in prose, assembling his impressions of contemporary life—one might even deal with his own sentimental affairs, that turmoil of voluptuousness and discontent which he had felt as a modern Tannhäuser sleeping at the feet of Venus. In this connection his break with Rosaura might prove an almost providential blessing!

He began working on the Tannhäuser theme; but almost immediately he had to desist. It was like tearing open a wound of his own and plunging his fingers into it to aggravate the pain. A poet may sing his sorrows. Such work is rapid, the labor of an hour, the mere fixing of an impression that seethes in the mind for a second and then passes on. But a novelist must deal with other people. A novel is a labor of months. One cannot linger so long upon one's own troubles. To do so would be a torment greater than a man's power to endure. No, his own story would be out of the question! And suddenly his ardor for creation deserted him.

But excuses were not lacking to his faltering will. Summer was coming on. Already people in Madrid were scattering to the resorts in the north. In such an atmosphere it would be better to postpone working until the following winter! For the moment he should do as others were doing!

But instead of heading toward the Bay of Biscay in their wake, he turned to the Mediterranean: a letter from don Baltasar had urged him to come to Valencia. The Canon was already back in his library-archive-mansion, all agog with the things he had seen in Rome, thanks to the friendship of the Spanish Ambassador and of a famous South American diplomat, Señor Enciso de las Casas, whom he regarded as one of the most important figures, next after the Pope, in the Eternal City. What a palace, indeed! A regular museum! And what a man besides, on speaking terms with all the Princes of the Church—they

even came to his banquets! And what a scholar! Don Baltasar had brought home some of Enciso's books in magnificent printings designed especially for book-lovers!

The Canon received his nephew with no great excitement. Nothing in this world had any importance, really, as compared with the monographs he had in preparation and the discoveries he had just made in Rome. It did not occur to him to inquire what Claudio was thinking of doing now that he had come back to Spain, nor did he ask about Señora de Pineda and whether she had had anything to do with Claudio's change of residence. The Blue Coast seemed to have faded from his mind as though he had never lunched on two occasions in the villa of that lady. Almost his first words related to something he had seen in the Vatican, the so-called "Rooms of the Borgias"; and in them his special interest had been in the floors! There could be no doubt of it, don Baltasar contended: only a few tiles of the ancient pavement survived—inserted into the modern floors as curious relics! The originals all came from Manises and bore the escutcheon of the Borja family—the red bull. He had made impressions of such as he found, and intended to use them in his forthcoming study on the history of Valencian tiles. And in a flash the worthy Canon was off on another lecture, enumerating the glories of that art which the Arabs had founded, and the Christians perfected, in Valencia, till the industry became one of the most prolific in the artistic commerce of medieval Spain.

"It was the sailors of Mallorca," he said, "who carried Valencian tiles, along with the gold-glinted plates and vases of the region, to all parts of the world. That is why they are still called 'majolica!'"

However, the tile-makers working in the villages of Manises and Paterna became real masters. In the documents of the time they are always referred to in Latin with a title of honor: *magistri operis terræ*. Or perhaps, in cases where they made tiles or bricks only, they were called *rajolarii,* since "tile" in Valencian is *"rajol."* The fame of Valencian tiles reached Rome at last; and Popes and Cardinals imported so-called "majolicas" to decorate their new

buildings, finding that they added a touch of gaiety and color to the white marbles dug from the ruins of Antiquity.

"The first Pope Borgia," said the Canon, "was too busy fighting the Turks to do much building; besides he was a jurist. Alexander the Sixth was more of an artist, and in making additions to the Vatican he chose to adorn the Papal halls with tiles from Manises. He ordered whole floors from the *rajolarii* who lived hereabout, following designs which I believe were made by Pinturicchio. That is what I am trying to make sure of now!"

Claudio was scantly interested in the Canon's chatter. He even thought his uncle rather bad-mannered. A good enough person, perhaps, for an old priest! But too much absorbed in himself, too much taken up with his *magistri operis terræ!* Not once did he mention Rosaura's name! On his return journey along the Riviera his train must have skirted the very garden where she had entertained him at luncheon; yet he had probably not even thought of raising his eyes! There was one thing, however, that Claudio was concerned to know. How had Figueras ever discovered that he was living in Madrid, and sent him a letter there?

"Oh," replied don Baltasar indifferently, attaching no importance to the point, "Señor Bustamante told me, just before I left Rome."

Claudio started with surprise. So don Aristides and the other Bustamantes knew about his separation from Rosaura shortly after it occurred! But then, he reflected, there was a continuous interchange between the diplomatic colony in Rome and the various groups that wintered in the neighborhood of Nice! Gossip was being continually carried back and forth. That automatic espionage had probably reported the disappearance of the young man, Rosaura de Pineda's "latest!"

Claudio stayed only a few days in Valencia. Then he went back to Madrid, unwilling, because unable, to risk the ride direct to Barcelona. Peñiscola lay on that route! Besides, if he left Spain by way of Port-Bou he would pass through Avignon; and that would be giving a deliberate kick at the wasp-nest of his

memories, which would rise storming in pursuit of him like so many angry insects!

From Madrid he went on to San Sebastian, stayed a week, grew bored, and then continued to Biarritz. The torment still dogged his steps. During the first days of his flight he had thought it the part of manners to send Rosaura postcards with conventional greetings, that she might know where he was. He received no replies; and he found her silence quite natural. Gradually he lengthened the intervals between such souvenirs, and finally dropped them altogether. On various occasions during the summer he felt constrained to write to her again—but long letters, with anguished recollections of the past and fervent prayers for forgiveness. But pride in each case restrained him. He did not post any of the letters. He would write them at night and leave them on his table with the idea of mailing them the following morning; but his first step on awaking in the morning would be to tear them up.

"It is better this way!" he would say to himself. "Let us not undo what we have done! I must cling to my freedom!"

And he would wonder whether she might be doing likewise, addressing to him passionate cries that would call him to her side, but then destroying them on maturer reflection under the angry promptings of pride.

Though he assured himself many times that he was growing indifferent to Rosaura and noted how gradually her image was losing its sharpness in his mind, he could not suppress his curiosity to know where she might be. Going on to Paris in early autumn and meeting acquaintances from the Blue Coast, he would always make such inquiries, though they would meet invariably a first exclamation of surprise and a second one of ignorance.

"Madame de Pinédà? We have not been seeing her for some time, nor have I met any of her acquaintances! Where is she, I wonder?"

The positive answers he received were in conflict with each other. Some reported her at Deauville during the winter, others

at the Lido. One person even said she had gone to Biarritz—but at the very time when Claudio had been there! In reality she had not been much in evidence anywhere since the winter she had just passed on the Blue Coast. Claudio concluded finally that she must have gone to London to be with her children again. He remembered that disturbing experiences in love always aroused bursts of maternal affection in her.

Claudio drifted to Rome early in the winter without knowing just why. After a year of virtual silence Señor Bustamante had written him, in Paris, in a slightly reproachful tone. And yet the Ambassador's letter had really had little to do with his journey to the Italian capital. As he analyzed his own motives he finally decided that he had gone to Rome for the single reason that in his prevailing state of mind that city was the only one that could really attract him. For a long time he had been thinking again of his poem on Pope Luna, who had lived his life dreaming of conquering the Eternal City without even once entering her gates.

"I think I'll make the trip for him!" Claudio said to himself one day. "Perhaps a journey to that goal of his fondest ambitions will give me a new perspective on his fascinating character."

Furthermore, the manuscripts and articles which don Baltasar had given him in Nice had aroused his interest in the Borgias and the Italian Renaissance. And he had finally given way to this triple pressure, remarking to himself that, after all, he could write just as well in one place as in another.

The now illustrious Ambassador welcomed Claudio in his palace on the *Piazza di Spagna* like one of the family. It was as though the Bustamantes had been living all their lives in that sumptuous edifice which had been assigned from time immemorial to Spanish legates to the Holy See. Doña Natí moved about in it as she would have in her own home. No one made allusion to Claudio's recent past. Rosaura's name never arose in the conversation. One could not have guessed that the Bustamantes had ever seen or known her! The "widow Gamboa" seemed about to succumb on more than one occasion to the

temptations of a spiteful frankness all but dominant in her nature; for dislike of "that Pineda woman" meant a great deal in doña Natí's life. But it was as though there were a tacit understanding that the past should be overlooked and the combative sister-in-law of the Ambassador managed to hold her tongue even when don Aristides was not at hand to call her to order with significant winks and frowns. Stella, for her part, was all happiness at seeing Claudio again; and not to spoil her joy she refrained from asking him what he had been doing over their long separation. Whenever the Ambassador was at home he set the instructive example by conducting his conversations with Borja on significantly perilous ground. As usual, his favorite themes were prominent Spanish Americans then present in Europe or even in Rome, with all of whom, of course, he was on intimate terms. But, at the same time, with diplomatic deftness he would dwell upon names intimately connected with Señora de Pineda, without once mentioning her name.

His own glory and importance were, naturally, much on the Senator's mind. He frequently evinced the sadness proper to a great man who is badly misunderstood and worse rewarded, in complaining that his government seemed scarcely to notice the great services he was rendering in Rome. Not a minister from the Republics across the sea but was a friend of his and had stopped at Madrid to receive the homage of the "Spanish-American Union." Thus he had made himself the effective leader of all the Spanish-speaking countries in the Italian capital, something which no Ambassador before him had succeeded in accomplishing.

"Why, my dear fellow," he would remark to Borja gravely, "I am the umbilical cord that unites the Church with all her offspring of Spanish race. All the members of the South American diplomatic corps avail themselves of my influence in transacting any business of importance. You must have observed that this palace is a virtual centre for diplomats of Spanish speech."

But then, as though he thought one concession were due to

facts only too patent, he would add with a touch of envious ingratitude:

"To be sure, there is Enciso de las Casas! He has as many people as I do, or perhaps even more, because he invites all the Cardinals. But Enciso is rich, and by spending huge sums of money on daily entertainments he manages to pose as a great diplomat just as he poses as a writer."

Don Aristides, for his part, confined himself to afternoon teas which he gave under the economical supervision of his sister-in-law.

"We didn't come here to get ourselves into the poorhouse," the widow Gamboa would affirm acidly. "With the salary a government pays an Ambassador one tea a month is more than it deserves. Let those people who want to get their board free, go and live on Enciso, who is willing to pay the price for the sake of being tickled under the chin."

Though such animosities did not prevent poor Gamboa's sometime tormentor from fawning on Enciso's wife and daughters with exaggerated flatteries, and from returning their calls with rigorous punctuality! Doña Natí did not wish to be forgotten in connection with any banquet held at Enciso's house!

In a short time Claudio found himself situated just as he had been two years before in Madrid. Everyone regarded him as the prospective son-in-law of the Spanish Ambassador. There was not even any allusion to the subject. His engagement to the Senator's daughter was taken as a matter of course. Stella's aunt was again treating him as a member of the family, showering upon him tender attentions she had for no one else. She always invited him on her drives with Stella about Rome, or on visits to the family's friends; and always managed on such occasions to slip away at the proper moment that the two "lovers" might be left alone. And Claudio allowed himself to be manœuvered by these devices—they were perfectly apparent to him—in view of a subdued, tenuous, but none the less perceptible pleasure he found in this contact with the young girl. Whenever he came into her presence his first thought would be of the

gorgeous fulsome beauty of Señora de Pineda. But then he would forget Rosaura under the suasion of Stella's more naïve and less noisy charm. It was like the subtle perfume of the mignonette, as compared with the suffocating fragance of the rose. Besides, he had been keeping to himself for many months past, and this timid bashful creature, however different from the other, was nevertheless a woman.

Suddenly, through one of those illogical caprices of his character, he grew bored with Bustamante and the latter's fussy sister-in-law, as well as with the whole tribe—that was his word—of Roman Cardinals, Italian princes and helter-skelter diplomats, who gathered about the board of Enciso de las Casas as at a free restaurant. Stella was the only one who did not fall under his disapprobation at such times; indeed the thought of her would sweeten his spirit to a certain extent. Yet he felt no particular urge to see her either, and he would remain for days shut up in his own house.

He was living in a little villa on the outskirts of Rome, a "plant" arranged in artistic style, with a little garden and a painter's studio, by a young American whose inclination toward all the arts was much like Claudio's in respect of literature. Claudio had met the young landlord in Paris at the house of a common friend; and since the man was returning to New York for a number of months, he had been willing to rent the villa along with its furnishings and its service—the latter an Italian caretaker, with a wife who also acted as cook.

The most important article of furniture in the studio was a luxurious divan covered with a canopy of striped silk supported at the corners on lances. The walls were hung with paintings which Claudio described as "ultra-modern." But in that house, at any rate, he could idle for hours, stretched full length on comfortable cushions, and follow his thoughts as they wandered aimlessly through the past. He was conscious of the spiritual influence of Rome, the pressure, as it were, of an environment that inspires the most commonplace souls with love of Antiquity and fills them with unexpected romance.

But, of the twenty-five centuries visible in the life of the Eternal City, his mind dwelt with greatest predilection on that period of a hundred years marked by the historians with the name of "Renaissance." He was beginning to feel as Enciso did—that he too would like to have been a Cardinal of the Fifteenth century. He envied the princes and *condottieri* of the time of Sigismondo Malatesta and Cæsar Borgia, who fought battles between dance and dance, organized fêtes of Carnival before the towns they were besieging, and crammed their lives with all the sensuous pleasures and all the idle arts mankind has ever invented, that they might taste them all at once, much as the drunkard empties a bottle at one draught. Actors on a very small stage, these men nevertheless seemed to Borja the great men of action known to human history. They all died young, as though at thirty life had no novelty unknown to them and they were willing to depart. That was an age of men thirsting for glory, Popes and secular sovereigns alike. They fixed their minds only on immortality; and, having won it, were able to look death calmly in the face!

The luxury of life in Rome became something unheard of before. The Florentines had called the Romans "cowherds," because the principal source of Roman wealth was the wild flocks that roamed the marshy *campagna.* But they had to admit that these uncouth "cowherds" were beginning to rival them in refinement and display. Venice, Florence, Naples, had resources of their own; but Rome attracted money from all Christendom. Gambling was proving as destructive to Roman family life as other form of license. The Popes concerned themselves with their Carnival programs as meticulously as with affairs of State. They entertained the public with wildly scandalous diversions, that people might feel completely free and lose thoughts of rebellion in the din of a noisy immorality. Writers were exaggerating the models Boccaccio had left in his "Tales," amusing the public with stories which brought marriage and the family into ridicule. Theatrical performances were becoming a fad in the palaces of the Italian princes and all the plays produced were

based on lascivious anecdotes. Respectable magnates kept oriental concubines in their houses, and even paid public visits to the residences of famous courtesans. Painting and sculpture knew no limits of modesty. Artists were permitted the greatest license in decorating the churches, even putting the faces of contemporaries on holy images. Sigismondo Malatesta dedicated a church in Rimini to the glory of his mistress, the beautiful Isotta, a woman notable for her inability to read and write in an age when women practised literature and the arts; and in the same church he erected statues of the Olympian gods and painted a naked Venus at the side of the Virgin. Such general sacrilege helps to explain the exaggerated zeal and the disordered fanaticism of Savonarola, in embracing sensuality and art under the same anathema.

Vainly did princes and Popes make laws against excessive expenditures. A costume of one of the women of the Sforzas rose, by virtue of the pearls and precious stones with which it was embroidered, to the value of two hundred and fifty thousand modern dollars. Weddings were attended with such costly ceremonies that one of them all but ruined a family. Parents therefore would marry but one of their daughters at the most, and send the others to convents. Usury was the leading industry of many Italian cities. In years gone by the Jews had been the only ones to live by lending money; but now they were being supplanted by Christians, who proved themselves more pitiless than the Jewish money-lenders of old. Interests of thirty percent were common, and sometimes they reached seventy or eighty. Everyone needed money to maintain the pace of life, and was willing to borrow it regardless of the consequences.

It was as though, in the mad rush for pleasure, people had sworn to die young. At no period in history had there been greater contempt for human life. Anyone who had an enemy thought himself free to murder him, either with his own hand or through hired assassins. Wealthy families employed chemists—"alchemists" they were called—to prepare poisons and invent new ones. The sins of wives and daughters gave oc-

casion for terrible acts of vengeance. Rarely did a day break on Rome without revealing a number of dead bodies on the streets. But this dangerous life put no check on the perilous adventures of darkness. As the Humanists preached, the favorites of the gods died young. Only a vulgar burgher of ignoble soul could aspire to the horrors of old age!

Despite this evident materialism, Humanism represented, underneath, a great spiritual aspiration.

"The scholars and artists of the period," said Borja to himself, "lived prostrate at the feet of Venus—a goddess who had come to life after ages of mortal slumber like one of the statues ploughshares kept turning up in the *campagna* of Rome."

Venus was not only the Goddess of Love. She was the symbol of beauty, rationality, joyous living—all things which the Renaissance worshipped. Even people of low estate felt stirrings of the same ideal enthusiasm. One day some laborers, in digging a ditch, unearthed a sarcophagus of Ancient Rome; and in it they found the body of a young girl, naked, white as marble, with golden hair that reminded them of sunlight. For fifteen hundred years it had lain, preserved by the mysterious liquid that had been poured into the coffin. Crowds came running to look upon it, and they gave the girl a name. She was Cicero's daughter! Who else could she be? Cicero, the orator, ruled the Renaissance as Virgil, the Magician, had ruled the Middle Ages! Magnates of Rome drew off the protecting fluid, which had saved "Cicero's daughter" for so many years, and distributed it among themselves for purposes of magic. Deprived now of its liquid shroud the beautiful body disintegrated in a day under the action of light and air. But, for once, Venus of the White Skin had returned in person to earth!

Christianity itself was saturated with paganism. Under the influence of the Humanists high officials of the Church fomented the mingling of the two religions, eager to show themselves men of their time endowed with a taste for good letters. Heaven became "Olympus"; God was rebaptized as "Jupiter Optimus Maximus"; the saints were "gods"; the angels, "geniuses";

Christ, the "Sublime Hero"; Mary, a resplendent "nymph." Nuns were now called "vestals"; the Cardinals, "senators." Hell was "Tartarus," and Saint Thomas Aquinas, the "Apollo of Christianity." The pulpits and even the high Consistories of the Church came to know this strange mixture of Catholic and pagan terms. In the very Basilica of Saint Peter preachers talked of "Mary, Mother of the Gods"; of "Christ the High-Thunderer"; and the Popes were referred to by their flatterers in Italian and in Latin as "Cæsar" or "Augustus," "Aristotle" or "Plato," "Cicero" or "Virgil."

This love of Antiquity did not suppress superstitions, however. Astrology was the most prominent of all the sciences. Even the Popes believed the stars had influence on the destinies of men, and regularly consulted magicians versed in the sciences of the future. Only Pius the Second, a writer, and Alexander the Sixth, the second Borgia, kept more or less free from such charlatanry. Alexander went so far as to ignore works of astrology dedicated to him. His son, Cæsar Borgia, on the other hand, though almost constantly a skeptic, was as superstitious as most men of combat who lead dangerous lives; and, like many other captains of his time, consulted fortune-tellers before engaging in a battle or laying siege to a town. Celebrated pontiffs such as Sixtus the Fourth, Julius the Second, Leo the Tenth, and still later, Paul the Third, either applied themselves directly to the study of astrology, or listened with the greatest seriousness to the prognostications of celestial experts. Paolo Toscanelli, physician and scholar though he was, held a post as astrologer to the Medici, and did not lose faith in that science till the last years of his life, when he saw himself a ruined man in spite of the great wealth predicted for him by the stars. All important decisions of State, and even matters of private life, such as a short journey or the selection of a medicine, were determined after consulting the heavenly bodies. Among the rich, no one would venture to sit down at table, don a new garment, or launch a new enterprise, unless conjunctions in the heavens were favorable.

Claudio's lonely meditations would always eventuate on the history of the Borgias and the falsehoods which hostile contemporaries of the family had circulated to their discredit. It was absurd, he thought, to judge them with the criteria of modern times. To overlook the age and the environment in which they lived was to sin against fairness.

"If the savages who are still to be found about the world are repugnant to us," he judged, "it is because their primitive customs are so much at variance with the relative civilization we have attained. In the same way there are abuses, injustices, absurdities, in the life of our time which future generations will regard as execrable or disgusting; though to us they seem a necessary consequence of the special spirit of our times. We shall not understand the Borgias unless we know the men and the conditions of their era. Pious souls of today look with horror on Alexander the Sixth, who was a Pope with children. That is because the Papacy of the present moment is a truly spiritual power, free from the temptations and moral imperfections inherent in all worldly powers; and it is closely watched, besides, by critics ever eager to catch it in error—the anti-clericalism of free-thinkers, and the numerous Protestant sects which broke away from Catholic Christianity.

"During the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries the situation was quite otherwise. The Church exerted moral rule over the great powers of Europe; but at the same time it was just a State among States since it exercised political government over the city of Rome and the territories of the Holy See. The Pope was a secular sovereign among other secular sovereigns. He was an elective king, as other kings were. Rodrigo de Borja was not the only Pope who had children and tried to do the best he could for them. The College of Cardinals from which the Popes had to be chosen was made up of rich barons, accustomed to living in more ostentatious luxury than secular princes because their incomes were larger. They patronized the arts like other barons, and in moments of peace they spent their time in hunting in order to keep their muscles in training for the prowess they

would need in war. When they were young they had their concubines, who provided them with numerous heirs; and these, if they were modest of speech, they called 'nephews.' But then again, when their children distinguished themselves in some conspicuous way, not necessarily good, parental pride would get the better of them and they would frankly own them as children."

CHAPTER II

Borgia Bides His Time

CLAUDIO thought the life of Rodrigo de Borja as Cardinal quite as interesting as his pontificate, later. There was a period of thirty-four years between the death of his uncle, Calixtus the Third, and his own ascension to the throne as Alexander the Sixth. During that time he served under three other Popes, Pius the Second, Sixtus the Fourth, and Innocent the Eighth, all of them retaining him in his high post as Vice-Chancellor of the Church, and each adding to the benefices he already held new parishes and bishoprics, which made the Cardinal of Valencia one of the richest of the ecclesiastical potentates. A man of tireless energy, complex and contradictory in his conduct as were most of the famous men of the Renaissance, he devoted half of his time to pleasures and the other half to business of State or to prayers; for licentiousness and worldly enjoyments were combined in him with the faith of a sincere believer. Such inconsistencies were not exceptional. Lorenzo the Magnificent would orate in the Platonic Academy of Florence on virtue and chastity, while maintaining multiple relations with ladies, married and unmarried, of his Court. He would turn from a poem in honor of the Virgin to salacious Carnival songs that would be sung at his orgies.

If his four predecessors kept Rodrigo de Borja as their Vice-Chancellor, it was because he could not easily be replaced. It was he who transacted the most delicate business of the Church and his policies kept enhancing the Pope's temporal power. He lost no influence at the Vatican on the death of his uncle. While the Roman mobs were pillaging such valuables as had survived the destruction of his palace, or were running through the streets

crying, "Death to the Catalans!" he was busy electing a new Pope from among his friends.

The Sienese Prince, Piccolomini, who took the name of Aeneas Silvius, in accord with a fashion that had come into vogue with Humanism, had always been a writer, whatever the post he chanced to occupy. His light, gentle, agreeable, fickle character seemed to be a reflection of his literary style. As a young man, at the time of the Council of Basel, he had shifted about between Pope and Anti-Pope according to the prospects of the moment. Like most literary men of his time, he had led a life of well-mannered license, recognizing two children of an English lady who had lived with him, while his enemies credited him with other numerous offspring he never acknowledged. He was the author of tales, poems, and scientific treatises, composed in accord with the tastes of his day. A manual of geography, which he left incomplete, described the world as it was known in his time, especially the continent of Asia. Thirty years later it was to appear, along with a geographical encyclopedia composed a century earlier by Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly, in the tiny scientific library used by a dreamer named Christopher Columbus. Aeneas Silvius enjoyed Nature as much as Petrarch ever did. He styled himself "the Forest-Lover," and during his reign as Pope he fled the pontifical palaces as often as he could, to take refuge in some leafy bower in Umbria shaded by age-old ilex trees.

Though Calixtus the Third had little time, in the midst of all his wars with the Turks, to foster arts and letters, he deigned to notice Piccolomini, and opened the most exalted portal in the Church to him, when, twenty months before his death, he made him a Cardinal. At the opening of the Conclave, Piccolomini was the newest arrival in the College; but he had his literary popularity in his favor. At that moment the subtle Rodrigo de Borja was only twenty-six years old; but with a boldness characteristic of his energetic youth, he determined that Aeneas Silvius should be Pope. The Sienese cardinal could be counted virtually as one of the Borgias. He had been at great pains to show his gratitude and make himself agreeable to his patron,

Calixtus the Third. Rodrigo did not give the Cardinals time to organize into their favorite cliques, each supporting a particular candidate. The moment the Conclave assembled, he anticipated all counter-moves by proposing that Piccolomini be named Pope by acclamation. His Mediterranean eloquence, coupled with the suddenness of his attack, swept the ground before him. The new Pope took the name of Pius the Second, and Borgia continued to fill his post as Vice-Chancellor.

At the age of fifty-three, Pius the Second was ready to call quits with frivolities and begin living as befitted his new title. His health was seriously shattered, especially by a tenacious gout which he had earned in Scotland on a long march, bare-foot, through the snow to a church dedicated to the Virgin. This was in fulfilment of a vow he had made during a storm at sea. Confined to his bed over long periods of time, he could attend only occasionally to the affairs of his high office and to the continuation of his book on "Things Memorable," to which he was consigning everything of interest he had heard or seen during his many travels. A short, chubby man with white hair, Pope Pius the Second gave an impression of mingled severity and gentleness. In days gone by he had set the pace for sumptuous living among the Cardinals. Now he dressed very modestly, and his table was an exemplar of apostolic frugality. In spite of his physical condition, he made frequent journeys to satisfy his joys in the beauties of Nature—the sole pleasures that were still within his reach. During his vacations in Umbria he would hold audiences and sign documents in the open air in the midst of the groves he loved. Disinclined by temperament to violence, Pius had nevertheless to deal with one of the most terrible captains of the time, Sigismondo Malatesta, a man as fierce as a bear in his moments of anger, though at other times he could be an artist of most fastidious sensibilities. This cruel bandit served the Popes, or made light of them, according as his interests as Lord of Rimini seemed to dictate. Malatesta concluded that Piccolomini was a weak, peace-loving man, and set out to despoil the Church of part of her territories. But the sometime novelist

finally took up the gauntlet. Malatesta's acts of sacrilege gave the war, which was to end in his ruin, the appearance of a small-sized crusade. For one thing the Lord of Rimini had put many priests and friars to death; but he had also given a pagan goddess a shrine in a Christian church; and during an orgy one night, he had the holy water in the founts of the churches in his capital filled with ink, so that worshippers who came to Mass the following day had to listen to it with smudged faces.

During the pontificate of Pius the Second nepotism and local favoritism flourished as they had under Calixtus the Third. Thousands of people came hurrying from Siena to Rome to seek office under their fellow-townsman, just as the Catalans had done during the reign of the first Borgia. Anyone who held, or who could adopt, the name of Piccolomini, thought himself entitled thereby to some rich benefice in the Church. Numerous nephews of the Pope came to occupy high secular charges. Everything, in short, that had occurred during the preceding pontificates was repeated now, just as it was to be repeated under succeeding Popes; and the Roman mob was denouncing the Sienese, who had now shouldered the odium formerly bestowed upon the Catalans. Pius the Second savored the satisfaction of his defeat of Malatesta, a terror to Popes and princes alike, by going off whenever possible to the Alban hills and settling on the wooded shores of Lake Albano or of the Lake of Nemi, among countless memories of Antiquity, waiting for goddesses and nymphs to appear amid the leafy bowers and finding Diana in person in every sylvan grotto.

During the course of his reign of six years Pius made a disastrous attempt to imitate the Crusade against the Turks organized by the first Borgia. The fanatical Spaniard, Juan de Carvajal, the same who had figured in the "Battle of the Three Johns," was now an old man; but he was the moving force in this new Crusade, which mobilized at Ancona. The crusaders were in large part Frenchmen and Spaniards. While waiting at Ancona for the arrival of the fleet that was to carry them to the Levant, they killed each other right and left in continuous

quarrels. It was at Ancona that the Pope died, vainly waiting for ships and money, looking out sadly from his bedroom window upon the few boats he had managed to assemble, and upon the ill-equipped and disorderly crowds of adventurers whom he could never hope to discipline into an army.

When the news of Piccolomini's death reached Rome the same rioting that had marked the passing of his predecessor drenched the city in blood. The populace ran the streets crying "Death to the Sienese!" and killing such luckless individuals as came in its way. At the moment Antonio Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi, the favorite nephew of Pius the Second, was holding the Castle of Sant' Angelo, as Pedro Luís de Borja had done under Calixtus the Third.

When the Conclave opened one party was in favor of recognizing the tireless and virtuous Carvajal. Another group was supporting the aged Cardinal Torquemada, also a Spaniard of spotless reputation, who was furthermore regarded as the leading theologian of his day. But these two candidates were eliminated on grounds of nationality. Besides, Rodrigo de Borja, a skillful and tireless agitator, held a powerful clique of Cardinals under his thumb and had decided to name a Pope of his own choice. Cardinal Barbo, a wealthy Venetian patrician, was deeply attached to the Borgias. It was he who, in company with Rodrigo, had courageously faced the wrath of the Orsinis during the escape of don Pedro Luís. Cardinal Borgia took such interest in the election of his friend that he had himself carried to the Vatican while seriously ill of fever with his head buried in poultices and bandages. The plague was raging in the city and many of the Cardinals chose to remain at home, to escape the privations and the exposure they would have had to encounter in sitting at the Conclave. Rodrigo Borgia took advantage of their absence to bring about the triumph of his candidate.

Barbo was a handsome man and knew it. He elected to call himself Formosus the First. To this the Cardinals objected, in fear of public ridicule; and they likewise vetoed the name of Mark, his second choice, since "San Marco" was the war cry of

his Venetian countrymen. Finally he fixed on the title of Paul the Second. Announcement of the election was followed by the pillaging and plundering inevitable at the end of every Conclave. Barbo and the warrior Cardinal, Scarampo, former admiral to Calixtus the Third, anticipating the chance of their election, had protected their palaces with soldiers and artillery. A first rumor spread that Scarampo had been chosen, and the mob rushed upon his palace, only to be driven back. When the news came that Barbo had been victorious, there was an assault upon his luxurious dwelling, which was filled with numberless treasures of art. Received here as at the other place with artillery and musket fire, but determined to find plunder somewhere, the rioters attacked the monastery of *Santa Maria Nuova,* on the pretext that the Pope-elect had transferred his riches thither. That place, too, was found guarded by troops. Meantime the whole city had sprung to arms, and the mobs surged a second time upon Palazzo Barbo. Finally, the new Pope compromised with the leaders of the disturbance, paying them thirteen hundred ducats in gold as ransom for his residence. But such alms did not prevent the underlings at the Vatican from sacking the apartments occupied by Cardinal Barbo during the Conclave.

The life of a Roman pontiff at that time was filled with such episodes. Paul the Second had to pay over some thirty thousand ducats to the Duke of Amalfi before the latter would consent to vacate the Castle of Sant' Angelo and the fortresses at Tivoli, Spoleto and Ostia, which his uncle, the late Pope, had entrusted to him. To avoid such blackmail in the future, Pope Barbo thought it best to have a man he could trust in the citadel which was the key to Rome; and at the suggestion of his friend Borgia he transferred the castle to the Spanish scholar, Rodrigo Sanchez de Arévalo, who was shortly to add a mitre to his title as Military Governor. Active and energetic as a Cardinal, Barbo seemed to be transformed by the high office he now attained. He showed himself a weak, lazy, and somewhat eccentric individual. He began to invert life about the Vatican, turning day into night, giving audiences at two or three o'clock in the morning, and

keeping even his most intimate friends who were desirous of consulting him waiting for weeks and weeks in town.

Hygienic conditions in the city and in the marshy *campagna* about prolonged the plague even into the winter months. Mortality attained terrifying figures. But that did not discourage the Roman populace from celebrating Carnival as the most important festival of the year. It was Paul the Second who arranged that the races and the processions of masks should no longer be confined to the *Piazza del Campidoglio* but should deploy along the *Via Flaminia,* at that time the longest street in the city, which acquired from this new custom its present name as the *Corso.* He also introduced innovations into the Carnival program itself, holding races between donkeys, boys, and especially Jews, these last proving most diverting to the barbarous multitudes.

Pope Barbo developed these festivals of Carnival largely as a means of distracting the Roman mob from revolutionary designs. During his reign, a conspiracy was discovered, which had as its objective the assassination of the Pontiff and the proclamation of a Roman republic. The plot was an affair of the Humanists, chief among them the celebrated Platina; but the most doughty, in energy and recklessness, was the poet Calimaco. The plan was secretly to re-admit all proscripts to Rome and hide them in the ruins of a building which had been dismantled to provide materials for the Vatican. Then a fight would be picked in front of the palace with the lackeys who were waiting outside in attendance on the Cardinals, in order to attract the attention of the pontifical Guards. At this moment the conspirators would make their way into the Vatican and kill the Pope and everyone else they should come upon. The plot, however, very similar to Porcaro's venture some years before, chanced to be betrayed. Paul the Second launched terrible anathemas upon the so-called Academy of Rome, where the adepts of Humanism foregathered —all of them "materialists and pagans," as he said, denying God, asserting that there was no world beyond this visible one, that the soul died with the body, and that a man might give himself

over to all pleasures, without fear of the divine commandments, so long as he avoided conflict with the criminal justice of the State. These men were Epicureans, followers of the doctrine expounded by Lorenzo Valla in his treatise on "Pleasure." They ate meat on Fridays and fast days, and berated the priests of God as inventors of the fasts and of the prohibitions against the taking of more than one wife. They revived the teachings of the mysterious book called "The Three Impostors" which had caused such a flurry in the Middle Ages by declaring that Moses had hoodwinked mankind with his laws, that Christ was a seducer of the peoples, and that Mahomet, though a man of greater wit, was a charlatan as perfect as the other two. "They are ashamed of their Christian names," concluded the Pope, "preferring others drawn from the Pagans; and they indulge likewise in the most scandalous vices of Antiquity."

Calimaco and two other Humanists who were compromised with him succeeded in escaping from Rome; but the illustrious Platina suffered a long imprisonment in the Castle of Sant' Angelo. His jailer, the Spaniard Rodrigo Sanchez de Arévalo, Bishop of Calahorra, was likewise a scholar versed in classical letters. Many epistles in Latin passed between captain and prisoner, the correspondence resulting in a decreasing severity in the privations imposed upon the unfortunate scholar.

The one man of the Church who retained public respect was Carvajal, prematurely aged, and his health broken by the hardships he had endured in Hungary in halting the advance of the Turks. He lived like a saint in a modest home, giving what money he had to the poor of Rome. The other Cardinals, coming from illustrious families or houses kindred to those of past Popes, spent the huge incomes they derived from the rich cures of Christianity in sumptuous living. One of the youngest, Rodrigo de Borja, took the lead in this respect over ecclesiasts older and far richer than he. Scarampo, famous for his connection with the crusade of Calixtus, was nicknamed "Cardinal Lucullus" because of the fantastic splendors of his table. While maintaining numerous residences and expensive mistresses, he was

also supporting the celebrated painter, Mantegna. Another patron of painting and sculpture was the French cardinal, Guillaume d'Estouteville, a man of incalculable wealth who also lived like a secular prince with numerous offspring about him, regardless of the scandal provoked by his licentious life. When these two magnates died, Rodrigo de Borja was left in unquestionable supremacy among the so-called secular princes of the Church.

Paul the Second died suddenly in 1471 from over-eating melons at the end of an open-air supper in the gardens of the Vatican at an early evening hour when, as people of that time thought, the air was polluted by deadly emanations from the marshes. Venetians had come into power with Barbo's pontificate, and the Romans abhorred them as cordially as they had the Sienese and the Catalans. Again Rodrigo de Borja stood ready at the Conclave with an important following of wealthy, bold, and restless Cardinals devoted to worldly things. With the help of Cardinals Gonzaga and Orsini, men no better and no worse than he, he turned the election to a sometime Genoese friar, Cardinal Francesco della Rovere, who assumed the name of Sixtus the Fourth.

The first concern of the new Pope and the College was to ferret out the treasure which Paul the Second had assembled during his reign. Shortly before his death the late Pope had informed the Consistory that he had a half million ducats at hand to make war on the Turks in case the princes of Christianity should make up their minds to support him. Gradually the nest-egg which the noctambulous Pontiff had hidden in different places came to light: fifty-four silver cups inlaid with pearls, large quantities of bullion, numbers of precious stones, and four collections of coin, the whole totalling more than four hundred thousand ducats. All these riches were at once transferred to the Castle of Sant' Angelo to be guarded by the Bishop of Calahorra.

Cardinal Borgia placed the tiara on the head of the new Pontiff with his own hands and for the third time saw control of Church

affairs resting firmly in his grasp. But though Borgia was appreciated at his true worth and favored with rich benefices by Sixtus the Fourth, the latter could not resist the influence of his own relatives, who gathered about him in two equally rapacious groups, the Riarios, children of one of his sisters, and the Roveres.

At the head of the Roveres stood Giuliano, a cardinal of fiery energetic disposition, the duplicate of Rodrigo Borgia both in character and ambitions, and, like Borgia, a Pope's nephew of luxurious inclinations. Close friends, at times, from congeniality of tastes, they were at others fiercest adversaries, pushing their mutual hatred to extremes. Giuliano della Rovere was to be an eternal thorn in the side of Alexander the Sixth, and actually won the tiara after Alexander's death to become Pope Julius the Second.

In reality, Sixtus the Fourth showed less affection for Giuliano della Rovere than for another of his nephews, Pietro Riario, whom he made Cardinal at the age of twenty-five—Giuliano did not receive his purple till past twenty-eight. Many contemporaries explained this preference (since Giuliano was the man of greater talent) on the supposition that Cardinal Riario was a son, and not a nephew, of Sixtus the Fourth. The Borgias, at any rate, never could match the magnificence of this Cardinal Riario, presumptive bastard of a Pope, who leapt in one bound from his status as a penniless friar to that of a spendthrift Cardinal. His uncle, or, if one prefer, his father, bestowed on him so many bishoprics, abbeys, and other opulent charges, that his annual income exceeded three million francs in gold; though not even this prodigious fortune was adequate to meet his unbridled prodigality. He ate on gold plates and rode the most costly horses. His lackeys dressed in silk and purple. Wherever he went he was followed by a retinue of poets and painters. He regarded the management of his tourneys and the theatrical spectacles he held in his palaces and gardens as important matters of State. "He desired," said Platina, the Humanist, of whom he became patron, and whom Sixtus the Fourth had made

librarian of the Vatican, "to compete in grandeur and magnificence with the most famous men of old, and as well in evil as in good." This young man, who had been a Franciscan friar some months before, moved about his estates in garments of cloth-of-gold and "covered his mistresses with priceless pearls from head to foot."

Magnates passing through Rome, whether Christian kings driven from the East by the Turkish advance, or potentates of western Powers, could not conceal their amazement at the splendor with which Cardinal Riario paid homage to them. He would build wooden buildings from the ground up to shelter banquets that were to last only a few hours; and then tear them down again. Each course served at such feasts was announced by a herald who rode into the dining-room on horseback, each time in a different costume, followed by a company of musicians. On the occasion of a visit from a princess of the Aragonese dynasty ruling in Naples, he offered a banquet which lasted six hours and comprised forty-four courses; stags, goats, rabbits, calves, roasted whole and served in their skins, and cranes, peacocks, pheasants, all with their plumage. The bread was covered with gold leaf, and the fish, as well as other victuals, reached the table with coverings of silver. The biggest dish, which was brought on by a dozen servants dressed in silk, looked like a life-sized bear with a stake thrust into its mouth. The best sculptors in Rome had been called on to fashion the pastry. The twelve labors of Hercules, all the figures of life-size, were represented in sugar frostings. Another course represented a mountain cave, over which crawled a gigantic snake wriggling like a living reptile. Castles of pastry with banners flying passed the tables, to be thrown to the mobs outside the palace, which were screeching the tunes of the orchestras within. Ten ships made of nougat and other similar sweets sailed into the hall laden with acorns of sugar almonds (the acorn figured in the escutcheon of the Riarios). At the end of the feast came Venus drawn by swans in a chariot of mother-of-pearl; then a mountain, which was rent in twain to disclose a poet—and he stepped forward to

express his admiration for the assembled guests in rhyme; and finally troupes of women dancing ancient dances approved by the tastes of the day as whetters of general concupiscence. In the three years of his cardinalate Riario spent a sum equivalent to three million modern dollars and left debts approximating six hundred thousand dollars. He died suddenly at the end of a drunken debauch which proved too much for his constitution. Sixtus the Fourth mourned him with a father's sorrow, pardoning his spendthrift licentiousness and lauding in him a young man worthy of his time, who had lived gloriously, favoring the arts and protecting painters, sculptors and architects. All the poets of Rome exalted him in their verses as a latter-day Mæcenas.

The death of Pietro Riario left a free field for the ambitions of his cousin, Giuliano della Rovere; who moreover was able to strengthen his influence among the so-called "secular" Cardinals because of the temporary absence from Rome of Rodrigo Borgia.

Sixtus the Fourth had conceived a plan for organizing a new Crusade against the Turks, and sent legates to the principal Christian powers to solicit aid in the enterprise. Spain was assigned to Borgia; and he set out on his journey thither in May of the year 1472. This was to be his first visit to his home since he departed from it in early boyhood; and he was never to see it again.

As the custom was, all the Cardinals resident in Rome escorted their colleague to the Gate of Saint Paul and gave him the kiss of farewell. In his suite came numbers of Italian bishops, clerics, lawyers, poets (these last his secretaries), and in addition two Neapolitan painters who ended by settling in Spain. He lingered several days at Ostia to await the abatement of a tempest, and finally set sail in two ships supplied by King don Ferrante of Naples. After a first stop at Corsica he made port at Valencia on the 17th of June.

At that moment Valencia was the richest city of the Spanish Mediterranean, as well as the gayest and most lively. John the Second, father of Ferdinand the Catholic, was deadlocked in an

unending strife with the Catalans, and Barcelona refused to recognize his authority. All trade by sea, in consequence, passed to the Port of Valencia. From the time of Alfonso the Fifth this harbor had been the center of import and export between Spain and Italy.

Claudio remembered a description of the city he had read in the "Memoirs" of a German traveller named Muenzer, who had visited Spain during the last decades of the Fifteenth century and expressed his admiration for its orchards of lemons, oranges, and palms, and especially for the well-clad women of the region.

"At Valencia," said the German, "women dress with unusual, and perhaps excessive, caprice. Their gowns are cut so low in the neck that their breasts are in full view; and they paint their faces and make such use of perfumes and cosmetics as might properly be censured. The people of the town come out in the evening to walk about in the streets, which are crowded with such throngs that one would think oneself at a fair. There is perfect order, however, and quarrels are rarely seen. The shops, especially such as sell victuals, do not close their doors till midnight. Had I not witnessed it with my own eyes I would never have believed such a spectacle could be seen."

This rich and joyous town, the mirror as it were of the genteel Italy across the sea, received the Pope's Ambassador with royal honors. Borgia had to wait for two days in a convent outside the city, that the preparations for his formal entry might be completed. The procession was two miles long. The Cardinal was mounted on a horse under a pallium supported by prominent individuals of the town. Before him marched the various brotherhoods of the parishes in the city, with crosses raised on high, each preceded and followed by companies of musicians and trumpeteers. The streets over which the Cardinal rode were covered with carpetings.

During the days following came the stupendous banquets which Borgia offered in his episcopal palace in acknowledgment of so much courtesy. This Vice-Chancellor of the Holy See possessed, in addition to the rich benefices of Valencia, Carta-

gena, and Oporto, and numerous abbacies, the fortune left by his brother, the late don Pedro Luís. The whole of this enormous income he devoted to display. In Rome, in the year 1461, he had outdone the most opulent Cardinals in a competition as to which would best decorate his palace on the occasion of the Feast of the *Corpus Domini.* So he had vanquished his rivals in the Sacred College in celebrating the arrival in Rome of the head of Saint Andrew the Apostle; and more recently he had been the only one to take cognizance of the Pope's proclamation of the Crusade by furnishing at his own expense a galley completely armed. To believe his enemies, gluttony was the only vice Rodrigo Borgia did not practice. His meals consisted of a single dish provided in abundant quantity. When he came to be Pope the Cardinals looked upon an invitation to his private board as a penance. He was similarly sparing in his use of wine, a trait he had in common with many strong and active men of the Mediterranean. Whenever he drank, his beverages were weakened with water. But such habits of restraint did not prevent the Cardinal-Bishop of Valencia from offering memorable feasts in his palace on this occasion.

The decorations along the city streets reflected the specialties of the merchants or artisans who inhabited them. In the *Tapineria*—or "Street of Clogs and Pattens"—those shoes, or boots, with high cork soles invented by the Moors, which made a woman walk as though on stilts in a fashion that was popular as far abroad as Venice—the houses were hung with various kinds of clogs, some of them very costly, with the soles made of gold or silver and inlaid with diamonds. All along the *Plateria,* the gold-workers displayed their finest products on trays lined with velvets; and at the *Puerta Nueva,* near the site on which the famous Exchange was shortly to rise, the buildings were covered from roof to ground with rich silken fabrics. Meantime the thoroughfares were crowded with gentlemen of quality, riding about town on mules, their ladies on the croppers of their saddles.

The nephew of Calixtus the Third was hailed by the city as

a national glory. Everyone saw in him a future Pope. He was not able to linger long, however, among his townsmen: his principal errand was with the King of Aragon and the latter's son, don Ferdinand the Catholic, who were laying siege to Barcelona. Ferdinand had recently married Princess Isabel, sister to the King of Castile, and was soliciting the Cardinal's aid in obtaining ecclesiastical recognition of that union. The Catholic Sovereigns-to-be were second cousins, and license for their marriage had been refused by Pope Paul the Second at the instance of the Kings of Castile and Portugal, who had political objections to the union of the two young people. However, the then Archbishop of Toledo, don Alfonso Carrillo de Acuña, a stout-fisted man, who regarded his diocese as his personal property and dealt with ecclesiastical matters to his own liking, forged the necessary documents, and the wedding took place, the assumption being that the young couple were not aware of the irregularity in the ceremony. Later on Isabel began to grow restless. Her conscience pricked her that in the eyes of the Church she should be living in a state of concubinage. Being a Spaniard the Vice-Chancellor Rodrigo Borgia had taken a great interest in the case; and he now came provided with a bull from Sixtus the Fourth in which that Pontiff reproved the couple for having lived together well knowing their marriage was null; but, at the same time, ordered the Archbishop of Toledo to validate the ceremony. The dispensation was not to be offered gratuitously, we may be sure—Sixtus the Fourth hoped that don Fernando, as King of Sicily and heir to the throne of Aragon, would requite it with ships and men for the Crusade against the Turks.

Cardinal Borgia spent some months in Catalonia, whence he returned to Valencia for an interview with don Pedro de Mendoza. At that time Mendoza was only a Bishop—Bishop of Siguenza—and Borgia had been commissioned to present him with a red hat. Thereafter don Pedro was the famous Cardinal Mendoza who, as Prime Minister to the Catholic Sovereigns, was known the world over as the "Third Sovereign" of Spain.

Titular lord of one of the wealthiest domains in the Church, Mendoza lived much more ostentatiously than the Sovereigns themselves—they were always in financial straits. His display was that of a real Cardinal of the epoch. He entered Valencia preceded by a band of negro musicians mounted on horses, and attended by a gorgeous company of Castilian knights, their breasts resplendent with chains of heavy gold. Behind him rode two hundred horses and a veritable army of falconers and game-beaters.

Forewarned as to the Castilian prelate's reputation for lavishness, Borgia greeted him with a banquet which reminded Valencian chroniclers of the splendors of Alfonso the Magnanimous. The rich tapestries that covered the tables were overladen with flowers, so arranged as to spell the motto on Borgia's episcopal shield: *"Ave Maria Gratia Plena."* No less than eight bishops from one company or the other sat down at meat with the two powerful Princes of the Church, and a host of secular guests. The "washing of hands" was offered in "great basins of gilded silver with enamelled bottoms," whereupon cups of "green ginger"—an aromatic spice then added to all sauces—was set before the guests. Next came seven great platters, each laden with two peacocks garnished with partridges, the head of each bird gilded with gold leaf, while from the necks hung little medallions with the escutcheon of the Borgias. The next course brought four silver trays, each as big as a shield and carried by four men, laden with huge pies, which, on being cut, gave out roasted ducks, coots, doves, chickens, kids, veals, and other toothsome bits. Each tray was escorted by a squad of servants bearing sauces adapted to each kind of roast, and its appearance was saluted by a crash of music from the minstrels who had seats on a special platform set aside for them.

The climax of the feast came with the entrance of two enormous trays, the viands so arranged as to figure a mountain covered with greens, the peak of each mountain serving as a rest for a peacock roasted in full plumage, its head intact, and spurting a stream of perfume through its beak. The flow of

perfumed water continued as the carvers stripped the peacock of its flesh, working from under the wings. Finally came the so-called "white course"—various preparations of milk, eggs, and sugar, and round after round of sweets and candied fruits.

After several days of masquerading and feast-making, Cardinal Borgia set out with great pomp for Castile, entering Madrid under a silken canopy at the side of King don Enrique the Impotent, who rode at his left hand. The Cardinal's purpose, in asking this visit, was to win the monarch's consent to the succession to his own throne of his sister, doña Isabel, as against the claims of a party supporting his only daughter, nicknamed "the Beltrameja," who was being denounced as an illegitimate child. This policy of the Cardinal gained him many enemies in Madrid; but he finally induced don Enrique to make peace with Isabel and Ferdinand. By the month of July, 1463, Borgia was at liberty to return to Valencia and prepare for his voyage back to Rome.

The departure was set for the month of September. Many Valencian aristocrats and litterateurs made arrangements to follow the Cardinal, repeating that Spanish "March on Rome" which had taken place in the days of Calixtus the Third. Everyone had the greatest faith in Borgia's future. Hundreds of gentlemen and students had attached themselves to his retinue and they marched to the landings, to quote the language of an eye-witness, "as joyously as to a wedding festival." The expedition—it amounted to that, what with the old train and its new adjuncts—embarked on two Venetian galleys. These were the only ships available at the moment, so that their captains were able to exact exorbitant prices for the transport.

Scarcely had the vessels reached open sea when one of those terrific hurricanes that sweep the Mediterranean in early autumn broke upon them, and the storm did not abate over the whole course of a voyage lasting more than a month because of waits in various harbors where the ships were compelled to take refuge. Finally on the 10th of October the galleys were caught unawares by a squall off Liorna and stripped of masts and rudders. One

of the vessels foundered with all on board. The other was driven ashore; but before it broke to pieces on the rocks, the Cardinal and some of the gentlemen in his company managed to make their way to safety. By the following morning more than two hundred corpses had been washed ashore, among them the bodies of three Italian Bishops who had accompanied the Legate on his journey to Spain. Seventy-five menials of the Cardinal's personal service were among the missing, and with them perished miserably twelve jurists, six knights and a band of Valencian students, who had been turning Rome-ward or looking forward to studies at Bologna. The Cardinal, who got ashore in his shirt-tails, lost all his wardrobe and his jewels, among the latter, the collection of precious gifts which he had been receiving from kings and barons in Spain, and several boxes of Manises-ware which he had been carrying back to Rome.

In accord with a custom of those days the inhabitants along the coast looked upon the wreck as a gift from God, threw themselves upon the stranded hulk, robbed it of all valuables the sea had not claimed, and then stripped the dead of their clothing. Borgia's demeanor during the tragedy could not have been nobler. His smiling calm roused the admiration of the most hardened seamen.

The Cardinal of Valencia returned from his embassy to Spain with empty hands. He had gone to procure help for the Crusade. All he brought back was an abundance of promises from the Spanish kings, not one of which was ever fulfilled. Nevertheless, Sixtus the Fourth welcomed him in Rome as though he had accomplished miracles in favor of the Holy See.

From the time of this journey, Borgia found himself called upon to deal with the ever-growing influence of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere. The two were equally subtle, equally determined, equally unscrupulous, in the spirit of the political methods of the day. Borgia, if anything, had the advantage of a majestic calm, a tranquil valor, a caution which always prevented him from losing his head and from saying things which he could not recall. Cardinal della Rovere was an impetuous

quick-tempered man and made many enemies by his bursts of bitter anger and his vindictive animosities. Borgia perceived at once that Rovere was aspiring to the tiara, and began to consider himself as a candidate for that dignity.

In the year 1481, the terrible Mohammed, who had conquered Constantinople, died, and the event was hailed with festival and public illuminations by the inhabitants of the Eternal City. Sixtus the Fourth had managed to assemble a fleet of thirty-four vessels under command of one of his Cardinals. Supported by ships of the King of Naples, the Papal squadron expelled the Turks who had landed at Ótranto and occupied that town. But this victory came to little. The Cardinal-Admiral was not a strong man and proved unable to deal with a mutiny which arose among the sailors after an outbreak of the plague on the vessels. The fleet had to return to Ostia. So one more attempt of the Papacy to make war on the Infidel came to naught.

Down to the day of his death, Sixtus the Fourth made it his policy to replace such Cardinals as died with young men of so-called "secular" character. The many relatives of his own whom he elevated to high posts in the Church evinced unconscionable greed and ambition therein, selling the most sacred things for money. Even the Pope was accused, without much proof, to be sure, of creating a "corner" in grain and selling the latter to the public at exorbitant prices.

Sixtus died, however, in August of the year 1484. On this occasion the violence of the Roman mob fell upon the Genoese who had been so scandalously favored by the defunct Pope, and who were now victims of even worse outrages than had marked the passage of earlier pontiffs. The palace of Gerolamo Riario was stripped to its bare walls. Even the trees in his gardens were cut down and carried away. Everything belonging to Genoese in the city of Rome was either stolen or destroyed—two vessels with cargoes aboard that were lying in the Tiber, a number of granaries, many shops.

The general anarchy prevailing furnished a natural opportunity for another outbreak of civil war between the Colonnas and the

Orsinis. Peaceful inhabitants were obliged to keep to their homes. The palaces of the Cardinals were turned into veritable fortresses. Giuliano della Rovere and Rodrigo Borgia garrisoned their elegant residences with mercenaries and raised earthworks before their gates with batteries of artillery. The whole city was in arms ready for the fray.

In the end the suasion of the elder Cardinals succeeded in restoring a semblance of calm, and the Conclave ventured to assemble to elect a new Pope. Borgia and Rovere met face to face in this election; but both were shrewd men and recognized realities, however unpleasant, without self-deception. They perceived that their hour had not yet come. The number of "seculars" in the College had been greatly increased by Sixtus the Fourth and Borgia was no longer the only leader. Rovere, also a Pope's nephew, was as wealthy, as lavish, as licentious, as Borgia, and to these distinctions he added a great addiction to gambling—all qualities that assured him an important following among those Princes of the Church who were like him in passions and vices.

The "old-fashioned" Cardinals were inclined to favor a man of their own virtuous tendencies, a Spaniard, Juan Moles, who had stood apart from Court intrigues and lived with the decorum befitting a saint of the old school. It was soon apparent, however, that his nationality would be an insuperable obstacle. None of the Italians would support him. The foreign observers then present in Rome felt certain that Rodrigo Borgia would be elected; and Borgia had the same feeling for some days, for he took thorough measures to protect his palace from eventual plunder. Borgia's adversary, Rovere, concluded that he had no chance himself, and optioned rather to work for a Pope who would owe everything to him and be under his control. He finally fixed upon Giambattista Civo, a Cardinal of Genoese extraction like the late Pope Sixtus the Fourth. Though born of a poor family, Civo was distantly related to the powerful line of the Dorias. Rovere resorted to every means to win the victory for him, even bribing some of the electors.

Civo at length carried the day and ascended the throne as Innocent the Eighth. He was a tall, strong, plump-faced, near-sighted individual, with remarkably white hair. He had two illegitimate children known under caressing diminutives: *Teodorina* and *Franceschetto*. His enemies asserted, however, that these were just his favorite offspring; that he was really the parent, some said of seven, some said of sixteen, sons and daughters. Civo had won the favor of Sixtus the Fourth by a bland conciliatory disposition which enabled him to be on terms of amity with everyone. Rovere foresaw that his own influence over this Pope would be even greater than the power he had enjoyed with his late uncle; and the Ambassadors in Rome reported to their home governments that the Cardinal of St. Peter's, in other words, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, would be the actual Pontiff.

Rovere soon perceived, however, that he had overlooked something. Pope Innocent brought his son, Franceschetto, to court; and that young man was eager to take advantage of his father's windfall by amassing a goodly fortune and having his fling in the world at last. Franceschetto was a heavy, and, on the whole, an unlucky, gambler. He tried to make ends meet by "fixing" all sorts of matters at Court on commission.

Meantime Innocent the Eighth began to organize a Crusade, just as his predecessors had done, and with even less fortune. His one achievement was to bring to Rome the young Turkish prince known as "Djem (or Hixem) the Grand Turk."

On the great Mohammed's death, two of his sons had laid claim to the Imperial Crown. Bajazet had finally come off victorious; and Djem, the younger brother, though supported by a large following, was obliged to flee from Constantinople for his life. In the year 1482 he sought refuge with the Knights of St. John, who were at that time occupying the Isle of Rhodes. The Grand Master of the Order saw in Djem a powerful instrument for holding Bajazet in hand, and finally concluded with the Sultan in Constantinople a treaty, by virtue of which the Knights of Rhodes would hold the Pretender Djem in safe-keeping, on

condition that the Turkish Emperor should not attack their island and further pay an annual tribute of forty-five thousand ducats under guise of maintenance for the prisoner.

Djem was transferred to some lands which the Knights of St. John held in Auvergne, in France; whereupon the sovereigns of France, Naples, and Hungary, as well as the Republic of Venice and the Pope—everyone, in short, who had hopes of blackmailing Bajazet into leaving them in peace—began to intrigue to get the Turkish Pretender into their power. Innocent the Eighth proved to be the highest bidder. He bribed the Grand Master of Rhodes with a Cardinalate and with many privileges and prerogatives bestowed on the Grand Master's Order. The Turkish prince was accordingly sent to live in Rome, under guard of some Knights of St. John. Since Djem was to be the Pope's guest, Innocent could henceforth count on the forty-five thousand annual ducats which the Sultan Bajazet was paying.

The arrival of the Turkish prince threw all Rome into excitement. In the days when Mohammed had been taking Constantinople a prediction had gone abroad that the Grand Turk would one day enter the Eternal City and fix his lodgings in the Vatican. Everyone saw in Djem's arrival the divine fulfillment of the prophecy, though in an inverted sense, since the Grand Turk was coming not as a conqueror but as a captive. He was given quarters in the Vatican, and lived tranquilly there for many years, not without being a source of constant worry to his elder brother; for the Janissaries, as well as the Turkish population at large, seemed ready to rise behind him, should he ever present himself at home.

Djem's arrival was in part overshadowed by an event of indeed greater significance. On the night of January 31st, in the year 1492, news reached Rome that Granada had surrendered to the Catholic Sovereigns on the second of that month, that Christian banners were flying from the turrets of the Alhambra, and that a great silver crucifix which Sixtus the Fourth had presented to the Christian forces had found its pedestal in the palace of the Moorish kings. The surrender of Granada was regarded in

Rome as a sort of compensation for the loss of Constantinople. Ferdinand and Isabel sent a hundred Moorish prisoners to the Pope in gratitude for the help he had lent them during their victorious campaign. Though very ill at the time Innocent the Eighth rode in the procession from the Vatican to the Spanish church of San Domenico in the *Piazza Navona* and sang a *Te Deum* there. Public festivities were numerous and spectacular. The Spanish Ambassador arranged a sham battle enacting the conquest of Granada. Cardinal Riario paid for a splendid procession depicting the entrance of the Spanish Sovereigns into the Alhambra. In the *Piazza Navona* Rodrigo Borgia held the first bullfight in Spanish style ever seen in Italy.

Bajazet, the Grand Turk, was in constant communication with the Pope now that the latter was custodian of his dangerous brother Djem. He decided to make a great gift to Innocent—a precious relic, the authenticity of which he, as a loyal Mussulman, could guarantee: the lance with which Longinus pierced the body of Christ on the Cross. As the priceless object neared Rome, personal delegates of the Pope, headed by Cardinal della Rovere, went far out from the city to meet the Turkish envoys and receive the Holy Lance from their hands. The weapon was borne in procession across the city to the private apartments of the Pontiff; and Innocent, though on the verge of death, rose from his bed to preside over the solemn ceremony of welcome. On this conspicuous occasion Cardinal Borgia found himself outshone by Cardinal della Rovere, who stood on the Pope's right hand. He had to do something to recoup for this lost prestige; so he attended the transfer of the Holy Lance clad in a magnificent coat-of-mail in Spanish style, with a costly sword at his side, and, on his head, a helmet inlaid with pearls and topped with a glowing crest of plumes. He was mounted, furthermore, on a fiery charger which he managed with the skill of a trained horseman.

The acceptance of the Holy Lance was the last public appearance of Innocent the Eighth. During the months of June and July he lay between life and death. He expended his last re-

sources of energy in assembling the Cardinals about his bed, exhorting them to brotherly love, and urging them to elect a successor more worthy than he. He died early in the evening of July 25th, in the year 1492.

Among the more notable acts of Innocent the Eighth Claudio remembered the encouragement he had offered the Catholic Sovereigns in the furtherance of their policy of expelling the Jews from Spain; and also a bull he issued against witches and black-magic in Germany—a document that was to be used during later years as basis for the varied persecutions of the Inquisition. It was during Innocent's reign, also, and largely in imitation of the conduct of the Pope's son, Franceschetto Civo, that a wholesale traffic in forged documents began among the clerks and scribes of the Holy See. Franceschetto developed this industry to extricate himself from plights resulting from his huge losses at play. Whenever young Civo was not going the rounds of Rome with a company of roisterers, and defending himself from the fathers and husbands of pretty girls whom he had ravished, he was usually to be found gambling at the palace of Cardinal Riario, who was indefatigable at such play. One night Franceschetto lost a sum equivalent to a hundred and fifty thousand modern dollars, and complained to his father, the Pope, that the Cardinal was playing with marked cards. This must have been the case; for everyone who played with Riario, even his colleagues in the Consistory, ended poorer than they began.

Claudio had seen the tomb of Innocent the Eighth, a monument in bronze with beautiful examples of contemporary sculpture which caused it to be carefully preserved during changes from the old church of St. Peter to the modern Basilica. Its fame in the history of art caused Innocent the Eighth to be remembered, while many Popes more talented than he have dropped from view. The inscription on the tomb declared him the Pope under whose reign the Discovery of the New World took place. This, however, was a falsehood devised many years after Innocent's death by enemies and slanderers of Alexander

the Sixth, eager to rob the execrated Borgia of the greatest episode of his pontificate. On the 25th of July, 1492, Christopher Columbus was still in Palos, at a loss as to how to find sailors for his expedition and waiting for Martin Alonso Pinzon to save him by recruiting mariners along the Spanish coast.

CHAPTER III

La Vannozza and La Farnesina

WHENEVER doña Natí turned her acid tongue upon Enciso de las Casas she would invariably reach the same conclusion:

"He likes low-down people, and can't help it—a fine thing, I must say, in a man who makes a show of his religion—and is father to more children than you can count! . . . And such a good wife, stupid as she is!"

If the Ambassador ever heard such waggings he tried to cancel them with a sort of condescending laugh. Bustamante's wealthy friend and present colleague in diplomacy was eager above all else to be known as an artist and a writer. Enciso de las Casas held to a romantic view of life. As he saw it, all great men had more or less irregular careers, and the greater they were, the greater the irregularities. He considered talent impossible unless it were accompanied by defects and aberrations on the side of scandal; and, reversing his reasoning, he was inclined to think that anyone who showed himself emancipated from commonplace morality must be a genius, even though he gave no other signs of it. That was why he felt irresistibly attracted to intellectuals and sinners, and tended to confuse the two breeds in his mind.

Doña Natívity's gossip did not miss its mark entirely. Enciso called on the Pope once a month, and maintained close relations with most of the dignitaries of the Church; but he also felt obliged to be "a bit of a bohemian" even on the magnificent plane where he lived. It was his impulse to extend fraternal indulgence to those who held conventions, social or moral, in contempt, and lived their lives outside of them. Enciso de las Casas did not choose to be an antiquary and a bibliophile for

nothing! Hence it came about that in company with the Cardinals who gathered about his board could be found not a few adventurers of celebrated names—ruined aristocrats without visible means of support, and artists whose escapades were noised about in hushed words with significant winks and blushing faces.

"I am satisfied," Enciso would say, "provided a person can show some romance in his life. You have got to be somebody in this world—then the evil ends by becoming good. God is merciful toward all sinners, isn't He? We must imitate His infinite goodness so far as we are able."

This lack of discrimination surprised many of his friends, who could not understand it in a man so evidently harmless, so conspicuously a gentleman. He made all South Americans passing through Rome his guests and smiled appreciatively at the praises they showered on his luxurious hospitality.

"That's the difference between me and my colleagues from other countries across the sea," he would say with false modesty. "You see I am an artist in my way. I have connections and interests unknown to them. I am sorry people over there are not better informed as to the importance of the position I have won in Rome here for my country."

That Enciso was personally above reproach was evident from the admiration which South American matrons expressed for him, even wishing for their daughters husbands as prosperous and as exemplary as Enciso de las Casas.

"What luck for Leonora!" they would say. "What a splendid match!"

In fact, Enciso was annoyed rather than not at his reputation for conjugal fidelity, which no one seemed inclined to doubt.

"Don't be so sure, Señora!" he would answer with an expression on his face which he meant to make significant. "Don't be so sure! How do you know I am not deceiving you? I really can be quite a devil, you know."

"You, Manuel?" And the ladies would quit him, in mocking incredulity.

Enciso, a "devil!" No one could believe it; and to such an

extent that Enciso wondered whether his good reputation were not a reflection upon his standing as a man of talent.

As a matter of fact, he really was a good husband and father, able really to be interested only in his family: a commonplace individual incapable of a double life, a *bourgeois* condemned, however hard he tried, to halt on the thresholds of bohemia without ever entering bohemia itself. And the diplomat found compensation for his disabilities by showering his affection on the inhabitants of a hell that was closed to him.

Claudio Borja he found interesting in spite of the young man's moodiness and rather inarticulate melancholy. Claudio, in his eyes, was one of those who could show romance in their lives; and Claudio was pleased rather than not that Enciso should make frequent allusions to the pretty widow from the Argentine by way of expressing admiration for him. Enciso, indeed, was the only one in Rome who seemed to remember Rosaura's existence; doubtless because she too could show romance in her life! He would avail himself of the most roundabout pretexts for mentioning the beautiful Argentinian, always with a smiling considerateness but at the same time with an expression in his eyes that would rest upon the young man as much as to say: "I know everything and I congratulate you on your good fortune."

In reality, Enciso had always admired Señora de Pineda with a wistfulness born of a feeling that she would be forever beyond his reach. A woman like her would have rounded out his life on the artistic side! But since he judged her inaccessible, he consoled himself by admiring those luckier than he, finding in Claudio a reflection of Rosaura's glory. To this, indeed, Claudio probably owed his frequent invitations to the diplomat's house, where they would sit talking for long periods in the vast library surrounded by cases of elegantly bound volumes.

"I am a good Catholic," said Enciso one afternoon after lunching with Borja. "I obey all the commandments the Church imposes on me; but at the same time I am a human being and I understand the weaknesses of human beings, the logical consequences of their frailty. For example, I like the Borgias, and I

don't feel any less a Catholic on that account. Oh, to be sure, I don't go so far as to set them up as a family of saints, the way some of their defenders do. But I don't think they were such black devils as their detractors try to paint them. In their vices, they were on the whole the counterparts of their contemporaries; and if they were a little worse than others, at one point or another, it was only a little worse, and the excess was due to certain qualities they had—their energy, their eagerness to surpass others, their love of bludgeoning public opinion—all traits of us Mediterraneans at large. All the Borgias were devout believers. Let's say nothing of Calixtus the Third, a man of blessed memory. Alexander the Sixth, the most abominated of the clan, was an eminent Pontiff who managed the affairs of the Church with masterly hand and left her domain so powerful that his successor and rival, Julius the Second, owed the lion's share of his grandeur to the Borgia legacy. Rodrigo Borgia proffered sincere worship to the Virgin. Wherever he went he carried on his person, hung about his neck or from a wrist, a crystal reliquary containing a consecrated Host, so that, in case sudden death should overtake him, he could receive communion without loss of time."

Enciso paused a moment as though his mind were making a rapid flight back over history.

"To judge the past with modern standards," he resumed, "is to fall into lamentable error and miss the spirit of the men of those days. Their lives were much more complex than ours. They lived in a period of renaissance when their thirst for pleasure, awakened by learning, was struggling with an ascetic education taught them as Christians in their youth. I think I understand perfectly the sense of devoutness that impelled Pope Alexander to worship the Virgin and to carry the Host on his person, while indulging in an aggressive licentiousness quite suggestive of the animal that figured on his family shield. The morals of the Church had not yet been purified by the criticisms of the Protestants. It was still a long way to the Council of Trent and its new discipline for ecclesiasts. People talked of the worldly vices

of men of the cloth in a spirit of amusement and jest, never with indignation or a sense of outrage, as we do now."

Enciso thought of an analogy to minimize the viciousness of the Borgias and other Popes and Cardinals of those times. They were, he thought, like soldiers guilty of infractions of military discipline and setting bad examples by insubordination, seditious speeches, or other demoralizing acts. But such a soldier was not a traitor; he still stood by his flag; he had not gone over to the enemies of his country! So these sinners among the Popes and Cardinals, in spite of their disorderly lives, were good Catholics; and, oftentimes, as was the case with Alexander the Sixth, by virtue of their talents and characters, they contributed to the grandeur of the Church more notably than Popes of greater virtue. Not one of them lapsed into heresy; on the contrary, they showed themselves intolerant and relentless defenders of the Faith.

"Rodrigo Borgia was ever concerned with maintaining the integrity of Catholic dogma and expanding the Church's domains. Not only was he sober at table and temperate in beverage. He was never a gambler, as were Scarampo, the two Riarios, and other Cardinals. As regards women, who exerted an irresistible fascination over him down to his extreme age, he might, like other Popes, have called his children 'nephews' and kept them out of sight. Instead he was a Spaniard, incapable of subterfuges and hypocrisies in matters touching his affections. He loved his offspring with a Southerner's devotion, and was concerned to help them and enrich them as a fond parent would. The outstanding defects of this man, unquestionably superior to all his contemporaries in firmness, courage, coolness, and talent for government, were strong animal instincts and an inordinate passion for his children."

Enciso's library contained everything that had been written on the Borgias from the time of their establishment in Rome. He had gone into their biographies in detail and knew their ways of living, their adventures, their houses and furnishings, the menus of their banquets. A description of the second residence

of Rodrigo Borgia had been found in a recently discovered letter of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, Rodrigo's most intimate friend in the Sacred College.

Ordinarily a man of frugal diet, the Cardinal of Valencia once gave a magnificent dinner to Sforza and other ecclesiastical delegates, among them Giuliano della Rovere. The walls of the palace rooms were covered with tapestries portraying historic episodes. Each of the halls, in accord with a fashion prevalent at the time, had a guest couch, which was regarded as the most important article in a well furnished mansion. Sforza, in the letter in question, notes that the carpets and tapestries were in perfect harmony with the color of the room. The couch of honor in the inner hall was covered with cloth-of-gold draped down on Egyptian carpeting. There were sideboards, or *credenze,* laden with gold and silver plate embossed by the most famous goldsmiths in Europe.

"Borgia and Rovere were friends at the time. Indeed they were always combining or quarreling according to the political situation that happened to prevail. On the whole, Rovere was the more consistent and implacable in his hatreds because rivalry, in his case, was soured with envy. He felt vaguely jealous of the social successes of the Cardinal of Valencia, and of that mysterious magnetism which, according to observers of the time, Borgia seemed to exercise upon women. He was irritated by the certainty that Borgia would be Pope before him, despite the pressure he was exerting on Innocent the Eighth (an influence which disgusted Ambassadors from abroad and provoked one of them to remark savagely: 'Why have two Popes, when one is bad enough?'). The two rivals came almost to blows at the bedside of Innocent the Eighth. Himself Vice-Chancellor of the Church, Borgia could not endure the airs Rovere was arrogating to himself; and the Cardinal of Valencia, always good-humored, compliant, courteous, was never more dangerous than when he could move an antagonist to wrath. A tall, muscular man, ever ready for action, he went about for the most part dressed in secular clothes with a sword at his belt. As for Ascanio Sforza, Borgia's

most intimate associate, his special diversion was the hunt, and with benefices netting him annually some million and a half in gold francs, he had better horses, dogs, and falcons, and better equipment for the care of such costly animals, than any monarch of the time.

"Worldly Cardinals, like Borgia, Sforza, and Rovere, were like senators of ancient Rome, in that they moved about surrounded by a Court of parasites, not to mention numbers of nephews or children. They travelled in military costume with cape and sword. Their palaces were managed by hundreds of servants, who, in case of danger, were reinforced by mercenary troops. The richer and more worldly captained factions of partisans who bore their names, rivalling one another in display during periods of festival, providing the money for processions of masks, serenades with instruments and singers, or theatrical companies who acted plays in the streets in front of their residences. The ancient nobility of Rome lived in relative poverty as compared with these potentates of the Church. Hardly a Cardinal but had his retinue of painters, sculptors, poets, and scholars, who created and wrote in honor of their patron's person or family."

Rodrigo Borgia had had a son, named Pedro Luís, by a Roman lady whose identity has never been established; and also a daughter Gerolomina, probably born of a different mother still. This was before the year 1468 when the Cardinal of Valencia, who till then had been merely a deacon, was constrained to take priestly orders in order to occupy the Bishopric of Albano.

But he continued his irregular life after his consecration. The woman who gave him most children and remained with him longest was Giovanna de' Catanzi (or Catanei) commonly known in Rome as *"la Vannozza."* No portrait of this woman has come down to us; but tradition represents her as a sort of Juno of the Trasteverine populace—tall, blooming, majestic, of ravishing beauty. She was the abiding affection of Rodrigo Borgia, who, for the rest, was not of a fickle roving disposition, but gave a touch of homelike tranquillity to his amorous relations. *"La Vannozza"* bore the Cardinal four children: Giovanni (who be-

came second Duke of Gandia), Cesare, Lucretia, and Geoffrey Borgia. Meanwhile she married no less than three times—her husbands accepting such dishonorable rôles in life in order to profit by lucrative posts accorded them by the Cardinal. By the time Borgia became Pope, Giovanna de' Catanzi was no longer his mistress but was living quietly and with dignity as the mother of his children in a palace she owned in Rome near the Cardinal's residence. She reached the ripe old age of seventy-six and saw all the Borgias in their graves. The people about her held her in high esteem, especially because of her munificent gifts to the Church of *Santa Maria del Popolo,* where she built herself a tomb with an epitaph displaying all the vanity of a triumphant plebeian. Mother, she called herself, of John, Duke of Gandia; of Cæsar, Duke of Valence; of Geoffrey, Prince of Squillace; and of Lucretia, Duchess of Ferrara.

Both of the children born before la Vannozza's time disappeared before Borgia became Pope, Gerolomina without leaving any trace at all, and Pedro Luís (namesake of the Cardinal's brother), after a brilliant and promising boyhood. Sent to Spain by his father to fight against the Moors under Ferdinand the Catholic, Pedro Luís distinguished himself as a soldier on numerous battlefields. His father finally bought him the Duchy of Gandia and arranged a marriage for him with doña Maria Enriques, cousin to King Ferdinand. However, the young man was recalled to Rome in 1488, fell ill and died very shortly, whereupon his duchy passed to Giovanni, the first-born of *la Vannozza,* whom the father was likewise turning toward a career in arms. Cesare, his second son by the Roman beauty, Rodrigo directed toward the Church. This was done while Cesare was still a mere lad and without consulting his preferences. It was now a family tradition that the elder brother should be a soldier and the second a churchman. So it had been with Rodrigo in the days of Calixtus the Third.

The perpetual Vice-Chancellor was open-handed enough in favoring his children. Cesare was five years old when Sixtus the Fourth removed the canonical obstacles to his assumption of

orders. Why not, since his father was a Cardinal-Bishop and his mother a married woman? At the age of seven he became Prothonotary of the Church, enjoying ecclesiastical benefices in Játiva and other Spanish cities. Innocent the Eighth named him Bishop of Pamplona while he was still a child. And there was nothing absurd in all that! Few ecclesiastics of importance resided on their domains. Those who received investitures usually sent some priest to govern in their name, and concerned themselves with their charges only to the extent of verifying the incomes from them!

"I have read and re-read many times," said Enciso, "a letter which Cardinal Borgia wrote to the head of the chapter at Pamplona, announcing the appointment of this ten-year-old Bishop—and a model of amiability and politeness it was, revealing its author's profound acquaintance with the foibles of human nature! Had the good Canons of Pamplona been surprised at finding themselves subordinates of a Bishop hardly issued from the cradle, they might easily have read between the lines that they were really subject to a Vice-Chancellor of the Holy See, a man almost as powerful as the Pope himself, who placed all his influence at the disposal of their parish, and of themselves individually, should they ever need anything in Rome! Could they be anything but grateful?"

Geoffrey Borgia, a namesake of his grandfather, and the only one of Rodrigo's children who left no history, likewise became a Canon and an Archdeacon of the Cathedral at Valencia when he was still a baby. Being a woman, Lucretia Borgia could not aspire to any benefices within the Church. Her father accordingly thought for a time of marrying her into one of those Valencian houses which had been friendly to the Borgias from the days when Calixtus the Third was acting as secretary to Alfonso of Aragon.

Contemporaries of Rodrigo found him "an intelligent man by nature, versatile, sagacious, of lofty ideals, wondrously assiduous and capable in the management of public affairs." He was not a great orator in public addresses; but in conversation in intimate

groups he displayed an eloquence and a learning that dazzled those who heard him.

"I can imagine him speaking as Pope," said Enciso, "in his audiences with Cardinals and Ambassadors. He must have had a deep, musical voice, in keeping with his majestic frame and his flashing coal-black eyes. As is frequently the case among men of the South he was a good deal of an actor, always expressing himself with a certain affectation of solemnity. Something of this formal eloquence, which Alexander the Sixth used not only on public occasions but in private interviews, is suggested in a report by one of the Venetian Ambassadors to his government. Whenever he gave a confidential audience to an Ambassador—secrecy was one of the pawns in the game of diplomatic trickery—he would introduce him into a tiny office, lock the door on the inside, and then, pointing to a chair, admonish with great solemnity: 'Pray be seated, Excellency, and, remember—whatever we say here shall be known to three persons only: to you, to me, and to God, who is our witness!' And he would raise his hand in reverent gesture toward Heaven, speaking in a voice so impressive that the wily Venetian, born skeptic though he was and well knowing the Pope's abilities as a comedian, could not contain his emotion in spite of himself."

The Borgia palace, today known as *Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini,* was situated half way along the street between the Bridge of Sant' Angelo and the *Campo de' Fiori.* It was then regarded as one of the finest in Rome. The Cardinal's post as Vice-Chancellor produced an annual income of a hundred and sixty thousand modern dollars. His minor bishoprics also brought in lucrative incomes. His jewels (especially his pearls), his tapestries, his gorgeous vestments, and his library filled with volumes of literature and science, were famous in the city. A skilled horseman by the time he was eight years old, he had better stables than many a king and even than the Pope himself. Everyone suspected that he also had a huge treasure in coin hidden away somewhere: despite his generosity and magnificence he saved large sums of money during every one of his thirty-seven years as Cardinal—

a reserve that was to prove the decisive factor in his battle with Giuliano della Rovere.

The long illness of Innocent the Eighth enabled the Sacred College to take precautions against such disturbances of the public peace as usually ensued on the death of a Pope; and the Conclave assembled on the 6th of August, in the year 1492, in an atmosphere of relative calm. ("Not more than a hundred or two people have been killed this time," an Ambassador reported of events in Rome after Innocent's death.) Twenty-three cardinals were present. The inaugural sermon was preached by the Spanish bishop, don Bernadino Lopez de Carvajal, who dwelt on the grave conditions prevailing in the Church and the need of "a speedy and judicious selection."

Giuliano della Rovere had been Pope in everything but name during the last years of Innocent's pontificate, and he was counting on stepping directly into the shoes of Saint Peter by buying out such Cardinals as were for sale—he had done that at the preceding Conclave. Since he represented the interests of France at the Papal Court, Charles the Eighth, it was whispered, had deposited a sum equivalent to two million modern dollars with a financier in Rome, to be used as Rovere saw fit. The Republic of Genoa had sent on another million. The Genoese took his election for granted. The King of Naples also seemed to be inclined toward Cardinal della Rovere.

Against him stood four candidates at all probable: Cardinal Costa, a Portuguese ecclesiast representing the "old-fashioned" moral element in the College; Cardinal Sforza; Cardinal Graffa; and finally, running a bad fourth, Rodrigo Borgia. A Bishop named Bocciardo, Ambassador in Rome from Ferrara, seems to have left the keenest of the prognostications made at the time. "Borgia," Bocciardo reminded his government, "is Vice-Chancellor of the Church. He wields a power almost as great as the Pope himself. The post has so many bishoprics and abbacies at its disposal, its properties are so vast, its income so enormous, that the Cardinals may be tempted to elect Borgia in the hope

that the plums he now holds will fall from his hands and become available for distribution among themselves."

The most serious objection to Borgia was his Spanish birth. Many Italian Cardinals refused even to consider the nomination of an "Ultramontain," as they said in those days of a foreigner born beyond the Alps. But it was as though the wily diplomat from Ferrara had been informed in advance of Borgia's strategy. Holding himself in the background as the least assertive of the candidates, he began his manœuvres of friendly and well-mannered corruption, corresponding to operations of a similar nature carried on by Cardinal della Rovere with the treasures furnished by France and Genoa.

Cardinal Sforza was the first to give way. Convinced, after a time, that his own chances were slim, he began to listen to proposals from his friend Borgia. In exchange for his votes Rodrigo offered him the Vice-Chancellorship, the Borgia palace with all its furnishings, which Sforza so much admired, and, in addition, the castle at Nepi, the bishopric of Erlau (which alone brought in an income of a hundred thousand modern dollars), and other minor considerations still.

The strong and wealthy towns of Monticelli and Soriano, Rodrigo Borgia promised to cede to Cardinal Orsini, with the Legation to the March of Ancona and the bishopric of Cartagena. Cardinal Colonna got the abbacy of Subiaco with all the strongholds lying about; Cardinal Savelli, Civita-Castellana and the bishopric of Mallorca; Palavicini, the bishopric of Pamplona which belonged to Rodrigo's son, Cesare; Cardinal Michiel, the bishopric of Porto; and Cardinals Sclafenati, San Severino and Riario, rich benefices and abbacies of less famous name. Even Cardinal Domenico della Rovere abandoned his relative, Giuliano, under pressure of higher concessions from Borgia. And there were "spiritual" considerations to be taken into account besides! The "worldly" Cardinals believed that under government by the then Vice-Chancellor, living would be even more pleasant than it had been before.

By dint of this division of spoils Borgia managed to win four-

teen votes among his own followers and those of the Sforza party. He lacked only one vote of the necessary two-thirds majority. But he seemed unable to obtain it: none of the opposite party dared swing about, in the certain knowledge that the rivalry between their leader and Rodrigo Borgia would be fought out to the bitter end. The battle finally centered on Cardinal Gerardo, an old man ninety-five years of age, almost in his dotage; and both sides did their best to win him. In the end Borgia's affability and Sforza's subtlety won the old Cardinal over, and his vote brought victory to the Cardinal of Valencia.

On the morning of the 11th of August the window in the hall of the Conclave was thrown open to announce that the Vice-Chancellor, Rodrigo Borgia, had been elected Pope, and would take the name of Alexander the Sixth. The news was greeted with astonishment at first. Not so very many had taken his candidacy seriously. He was a foreigner, and a Spaniard, and everyone feared a new schism if a non-Italian Cardinal attained the tiara. His victory, therefore, gives some impression of the prestige which he must have won in Rome and the respect in which he was held in the Courts of Italy as well as in the rest of Europe. It was of little avail for his enemies to protest against the measures he had used at the Conclave, and for the sharp-tongued Infesura to write that "Alexander the Sixth made himself Pope by dividing his property among the poor." After the first moments of stupor had passed, everyone admitted that this Cardinal, who had served as Vice-Chancellor under five Popes and was more expert in ecclesiastical affairs than any living man, was the wisest possible choice at that moment. He had all the qualities of a great temporal ruler, and no one would be more likely to bring the Church safely through the problems then confronting her. People recalled his tireless application to his duties, and the fact that, over a long period of thirty-seven years, he had never missed a single Consistory of the Church, except in case of serious illness—something that could not have been said of any other Cardinal. The Romans, for their part, had at last found a man to their liking. They approved of the bearing of

this handsome Pope who rode about their town as majestic as a king. The precocious Pico della Mirandola wrote a panegyric in Borgia's honor, glorifying among all his qualities his physical attractiveness especially.

"With the irregularities in his personal life," said Enciso, "and his many illegitimate children, no one at the time had any fault to find. In Italy, and in the rest of Christendom, people viewed licentiousness in high ecclesiastical dignitaries with an indulgence which the modern mind can scarcely understand. Borgia's election was hailed with joy both at home and abroad, many Humanists of distinction joining the popular Pico in proclaiming their satisfaction that the pontifical throne had fallen to a man of such eminent qualifications, who gave promise of a long and brilliant pontificate."

On the evening of the day of election, the "Conservers," or *ædiles,* of Rome, rode in torch-light procession to the Papal Palace to offer their homage to the new Pontiff. With them marched eight hundred Roman citizens of prominence. Bonfires blazed in every street, while throngs rioted up and down, cheering the name of the sometime Cardinal of Valencia.

His coronation, on the 26th of August, was a ceremony memorable for its splendor. Ambassadors informed their governments that "never before had the like been seen in Rome." The nobility of the Papal States flocked to the Eternal City. The buildings along the streets were covered with tapestries and garlands of flowers. Arches of triumph were erected in many places bearing laudatory poems in Humanistic Latin, addressed to Alexander the Sixth—one such, a Latin distich proclaiming: "A Cæsar made Rome great; now Alexander exalts her boldly to the stars: that Cæsar was a man: this Alexander a god." Chroniclers pay naïve testimony to the public's admiration for this new Pope, "tall of body, of vigorous manhood, of majestic bearing, riding a snow-white charger with the skill of a perfect knight, smiling serenely upon the multitudes and blessing them with noble gesture." An eye-witness of the coronation, one Michael Fernus, ends his story with these superlatives: "What noble

majesty on his brow! What geniality in his gaze! How enhanced the veneration he inspires by the splendor and dignity of a strong handsome physique, which bespeaks the florid health he enjoys!"

The coronation procession consumed hours in forcing its way from the Vatican to the Lateran Church through the aggressive throngs that fought through the guarding lines to kiss the feet of the Pontiff or touch his white war-horse. It was mid-August, and the heat and dust caused many prostrations. The Pope himself, in spite of his strength and endurance, fainted as he was dismounting in front of the Lateran basilica, and did not revive till his face had been dashed with water.

"This spontaneous acclaim," said Enciso, "a tribute not paid to preceding Popes, stands in contrast with the unheard-of insults and denunciations which were heaped upon Alexander, years later, by this same Roman populace and by the very poets who on this occasion were hailing him."

And the enthusiasm was not confined to Rome. Milan and Florence broke into public rejoicing at the advent of the Spanish Pope. As regards Milan, the demonstration may have been the work of Cardinal Sforza, who was a relative of the reigning Duke and a great friend of the Borgias. But there was nothing artificial in the tribute paid by Florence; and even at Genoa, the home of the Roveres, all except actual partisans of that family gratefully recalled the memory of Calixtus the Third and applauded the ascension of his nephew. Writers in Germany felt that "the world had reason to place great hopes on the virtues of the new Pontiff," and the regent of Spain sent envoys bearing gifts of magnificent horses and precious furs.

Borgia's first measures seemed to justify the confidence which most of his contemporaries reposed in him. First of all he restored order in the city, that its inhabitants might live in peace. Two hundred and twenty murders had taken place in the period between the final illness of Innocent the Eighth and the coronation of Alexander the Sixth. Four delegates were appointed to hear complaints on the part of citizens, and Alexander himself

granted audiences to such as desired to bring important matters to his personal attention. To put the Church finances in order he set the example of economy himself by limiting the expenditures of his private Court to seven thousand modern dollars a month. His table was of such simplicity that the Cardinals, and especially his friend Sforza, accustomed to sumptuous dining, regarded acceptance of an invitation to his house as a professional hazard. Even his son Cesare, and Cardinal Giovanni Borgia, his nephew, likewise tried to avoid these meals of a single course.

The Ambassadors in Rome all approved the election. Alexander was the Pope long awaited, who was to reform the spendthrift Court of Rome, reestablish order in the city, and set the example of a modest and just régime in the Church, with some regard to the principles of Christianity. They were all well aware of the life he had been leading, of the amusements he had permitted himself in youth and in maturer manhood. They knew about his women and his children. But, at that time, people commonly distinguished between a man and the office he held. The fact that Cardinal Borgia lived in scandal as others had done was no reason for doubting his ability to be a great Pontiff.

"Unfortunately," continued Enciso, "his passionate devotion to his family, his ambition to raise the house of Borgia to permanent power, lay at the bottom of all his projects and policies. This, after all, was nothing more nor less than what Calixtus the Third had tried to do in advancing his nephew, Pedro Luís. But Alexander the Sixth manifested the full vehemence of his personality in furthering such ambitions, and his heirs, besides, were not his nephews, but his sons. The moment Rodrigo Borgia found the tiara on his head he rewarded his electors according to pledges given; and then, even before the Conclave had dissolved, raised his son Cesare, at the time barely fifteen years old, to the Archbishopric of Valencia, a post created by the preceding Pope at his instance, and, with its annual income of three hundred and twenty thousand modern dollars, constituting one of the richest benefices in Christendom. Almost in the same breath he elevated

his nephew, Giovanni Borgia, previously Archbishop of Monreale, to the College of Cardinals."

At this point the diplomat smiled as though entreating Claudio's forgiveness for the slight he was about to pay the young man's fellow-countrymen:

"We must not forget, either, that Rome was again besieged by relatives and townsmen of the Borgia family. Many Valencians appeared on the scene, though their sole title to recognition was the fact that they came from the same locality as the Pope. Other Spaniards from other regions considered their mere nationality as good reason for preferences. The 'March on Rome' that took place under Calixtus the Third was nothing compared to the Spanish invasion which marked the ascension of Alexander the Sixth. A plague of Spanish locusts seemed to settle on the Vatican, its perquisites and dependencies. Borgia was by nature a generous, open-handed man; and though he had passed most of his life in Italy and counted his best friends among Italians, he enjoyed being surrounded by Spaniards and hearing his native language. He filled all the posts in his personal service with people from Valencia and talked with them in the Valencian dialect, the language which the Borgias used among themselves."

Here was already enough to compromise the Pontiff's good intentions and deflect him in the directions followed by his predecessors! But another thing supervened to become a source of greater scandal still—an untimely, half-senile love affair which was the laughing stock first of Rome and later of all Europe.

His relations with *la Vannozza* were now a matter of the distant past, attested only by the presence of four children: Giovanni, Cesare, Lucretia, and Geoffrey—the affair with that wholesome girl from the plebeian quarter across the Tiber had begun shortly after his return from his mission in Spain. At a time when Cardinal Borgia was fifty-two, Vannozza was already forty, well past the age for inspiring any specially wild enthusiasms in the powerful magnate to whom she had belonged. Vannozza however was not a woman to sulk and pine at her desertion by the Cardinal. She straightway married her second hus-

band, an intriguing litterateur, quite willing to close an eye on his bride's past! For a long time, thereafter, Rodrigo Borgia lived without giving further cause for public gossip, while many of his colleagues in the Sacred College were gambling madly or making public ostentation of their mistresses. He seemed wholly absorbed in educating Vannozza's four children and providing for their futures. He had taken them from their mother and sent them to be educated elsewhere, opining that that buxom, passionate, and good-natured woman of the people was, nevertheless, an ignorant uncultivated person, with no distinction in manner or tastes. She would not be likely to furnish the proper environment for young people destined to high station.

Prominent in the Roman aristocracy of the time was a niece of Cardinal Borgia, Adriana de Milá y Borja, granddaughter of Catalina Borja, the second sister of Calixtus the Third.

"You probably remember," said Enciso, "that the sisters of the first Borgia were known in Valencia as 'the Bishopesses' *(las Bisbesas)* at a time when Alfonso Borgia was just a Bishop in that town. The 'Bishopesses' even occupied the Episcopal Palace in Valencia while their brother was absent in Italy, and received suitors for their daughters in the very halls of that residence. This, at least, was the case with three of the sisters; for the youngest of the four, doña Francisca, remained a spinster all her life and died in the odor of sanctity, setting the precedent, as it were, for Saint Francis Borgia in that family of strong men and women, where everyone seemed destined to do unusual things, either becoming a great saint or a great sinner.

"Doña Catalina, elder sister to Rodrigo's mother Isabel, married a nobleman of Játiva, don Juan de Milá; and doña Adriana was a granddaughter of this pair. She came to Rome and played a conspicuous part in Roman society as grand-niece of a Pope and niece to the famous Cardinal-Vice-Chancellor. She eventually married Luigi Orsini, lord of the stronghold at Bassanello. Left a widow with one son, she threw herself merrily into the gay life of the capital, setting great store on her double prestige as a Borgia by blood and an Orsini by marriage. The Vice-Chancellor

thought himself fortunate in having such a great lady at hand. To her he entrusted the education of his four children and sent them to live in her palace near the *Monte Giordano*.

"For all of her aristocratic pretensions," continued Enciso, "Adriana de Milá had little property of her own and was wholly at the mercy of her more and more powerful uncle. That she did her work as tutor and governess well, there can be no doubt. Under the teaching of this Valencian Orsini the four children of the rough-and-tumble Vannozza acquired all the distinction of mind and manner that was expected in those days in the offspring of the mighty. She must have been a severe and perhaps ill-tempered preceptress. As the Pope's children grew older and became celebrities in their own right, they never slighted their cousin and governess, but they always treated her with a certain rancorous coldness."

The South American diplomat thought a moment, and then resumed with a significant smile:

"This attitude of theirs may have been partly due to the rôle doña Adriana was to play with their father. During the years just preceding his ascent to the Papacy, the period around 1489, that is, Rodrigo Borgia began to find the society of his niece, Adriana, exceedingly attractive. His children were no longer about. Giovanni and Cesare were away at school—Cesare at the University of Perugia, where he was studying literature, and learning the arts of amusement in fashion at the time. Lucretia and Geoffrey were also living elsewhere, the former destined to an early marriage of political convenience. But there was someone left to make things interesting for the Cardinal at the Orsini Palace, a young girl of striking beauty, whose charms—among other things, an amazing head of blond hair—were already the talk of Rome. The girl was a frequent visitor at Adriana's house. Following a custom of the day, she had been matched, while still a mere child, to Adriana's son, Orsino Orsini. Julia Farnese, such was the young lady's name, was everywhere known as *"la bella Giulia."* Her worldly-wise gaiety and wit were as remarkable as her beauty. She was only eighteen. The Cardinal, forty years

her senior, might easily have been her father, or even her grandfather. The Princess Orsini at once perceived the deep impression Julia had made on the Cardinal. He was fifty-eight years old at the time—the period of grand passions for aging libertines, when they seem to grow extremely susceptible to youthful beauty.

"Adriana may have been moved by her own aristocratic ambitions, or perhaps by a mother's devotion to the fortunes of her son. A woman of her shrewdness must have observed that many noble families owed their prosperity to the fact that some of their women had been mistresses of kings. Her uncle, the Cardinal, might easily become a king some day—not a few people regarded his eventual ascension to the pontificate as a foregone conclusion. The precocious Julia, never remarkable for ingenuousness, must have had similar thoughts. It would have flattered any woman living in Rome in those days to see herself courted by the most eminent of the Princes in the Sacred College. If she speculated in these directions, one must also add that she speculated soundly. Her relation with the future Pope, who might have been her grandfather, was the point of departure for the dizzy ascent to glory of the Farnese family. Up to that time the Farneses had been inconspicuous members of the poorer gentry. But from the day Julia became Rodrigo Borgia's mistress the family's fortune changed. Alexander the Sixth made a Cardinal of Alessandro Farnese, Julia's elder brother. When the appointment was made known wits of the Roman populace dubbed the new Prince of the Church 'Cardinal Petticoats'—the petticoats in question being both the petticoats of *la bella Giulia,* and those other petticoats which seemed to be the new Cardinal's exclusive preoccupation; for he led a life more scandalous and more violent than any of the Borgias. 'Cardinal Petticoats' lost no time in courtships, nor did he 'attract women like lodestone' as Rodrigo Borgia was credited with doing. Whenever he saw a woman who interested him, he would carry her off by force regardless of the blood he might have to shed in order to obtain her. Years later this brother of *la bella Giulia* became Pope under the name of Paul

the Third. And so things went on for the Farnese family! Its last personage of note was Queen Isabel Farnese, who died in 1758 on the throne of Spain!

"You may know, my dear Claudio, that this protégé of Pope Borgia was more fortunate than Borgia himself. The remains of Alexander the Sixth lie in an inconspicuous tomb in the Church of Monserrat, a Spanish establishment in Rome. The ashes of Paul the Third, 'Cardinal Petticoats,' are offered to the veneration of the Christian world in an imposing monument in the Cathedral of Saint Peter. At the foot of the sarcophagus stands a statue of Justice, a beautiful female figure entirely nude. It was Julia herself who posed for that statue. In later days the figure was covered with a metal garment to protect the faithful from undue shock."

Rodrigo Borgia became Pope at the very height of his passion for this youthful, shrewd, and calculating girl. Adriana de Milá-Orsini facilitated matters. She married Julia to her son, Orsino Orsini; and the day following the ceremony, which took place in the Cardinal's palace, the young husband departed for his castle at Bassanello, leaving Julia Farnese in Rome as lady-in-waiting to Lucretia Borgia, daughter of the Vice-Chancellor. She gave a first child to Rodrigo Borgia in 1492, on the eve of his election. In the language of the Roman populace *la bella Giulia* had now become *la Farnesina.*

"What is harder to believe," said Claudio, "is that she gave him a second son, Giovanni Borgia, in the year 1498, when her protector was sixty-seven years old and had been Pope for five years!"

Was Julia Farnese really enamoured of Rodrigo Borgia? It would seem so. She was much more careless than her consecrated lover in obtruding their relation on public attention. Women of the aristocracy of the Fifteenth century, Giulia Farnese and Adriana Orsini saw nothing sacrilegious in such connections with the Papacy. Julia was immensely flattered by the worldly satisfactions that came to her therefrom. She was envied, she was courted, she was flattered. Instead of shunning her in

holy horror, people buried her in praises, adulations, prayers. Her favor was one of the certain roads that led to fortune. To be sure, there were men of ardent faith and lofty morality who decried the license of the Papal Court. But people at large thought of such critics as fanatical grumblers, unworthy of attention from serious people. Why get so excited about a Pope's private business? At the worst, the Pontiff's waywardness was the source of spicy stories and delicious wit!

As Alexander's reign went on and his policies aroused more and more hostility, insulting wall-scribblers and anonymous satires began calling *la Farnesina* "the Bride of Christ." But the sacrilegious epithet brought no tears to her eyes. Rather she laughed at it as a good joke, which, furthermore, flattered her pride. The important point with her was that the Farnese family was prospering under the protecting wing of the Church.

"One has to admit," the young Spaniard concluded, in comment on the diplomat's narrative, "that Julia Farnese had discovered her career, and that she followed it successfully. She specialized in Popes. After Alexander's death, she became the mistress of Julius the Third, that Giuliano della Rovere who was the implacable foe of the Borgias. Through him she was able to make her brother, Alessandro Farnese, Pope Paul the Third! A Pope Farnese and a Queen Farnese! All thanks to Rodrigo Borgia and his inexhaustible amorousness, well befitting the symbol of the red bull that pranced across the heraldic escutcheon of his family!"

CHAPTER IV

Lucretia Marries

"IF Alexander the Sixth," Enciso continued, "had contented himself with ruling the Church without interfering in the political life of his time, the sins of his private life would have been forgotten, as was the case with other Popes. But a desire to strengthen the prestige of the Papacy, which, beyond the walls of Rome, was everywhere disregarded and disobeyed, did not permit him to live a life of indulgent selfishness. He was a Spaniard, furthermore; and Ferdinand the Catholic, the shrewdest statesman of that period, tried to use him as a tool, constantly rearing powerful adversaries against him and deserting him after getting him involved in dangerous enterprises. Critics who judge Rodrigo Borgia as a soulless politician, guided exclusively by personal interest, forget that he lived in an age of treacherous double-faced sovereigns: Louis the Twelfth of France; Ferdinand the Fifth of Spain; Henry the Seventh of England. As compared with these tricksters of such disconcerting duplicity and treason, Alexander the Sixth and even Cesare Borgia were honest and straightforward diplomats."

The new Pope first had to deal with his Italian States, which were living in utter anarchy. Angered at his rival's triumph, Giuliano della Rovere came to terms with the Kingdom of Naples, which had combatted the Borgias from the days of Calixtus the Third. Naples, as well as Florence and other States, began annexing territories belonging to the Church. Hardly had Alexander taken his seat on the pontifical throne than Franceschetto Civo, scion of the late Pope, Innocent the Eighth, sold out to Virgilio Orsini, Captain-General of the King of Naples, and handed over the domains of Cervetta and Anghillara which he had received in fief from his parent. Orsini, himself, did not

possess the forty thousand ducats which were paid to Civo. Everyone knew that the money came from the King of Naples, who had engineered the trade in order to get a foothold inside the Papal frontiers; and that the go-between in the operation was Giuliano della Rovere, whose motive was to embarrass his victorious adversary. In fact, the Sacred College was aroused at this treachery on the part of a Cardinal, to the damage of Church interests. Rovere had to flee from Rome and shut himself up in the citadel at Ostia near the Mouths of the Tiber, a fortress regarded as impregnable by the strategists of the epoch, and from which he could maintain easy communications with Naples.

Meanwhile Ludovico Sforza, surnamed The Moor, who was governing the Duchy of Milan as guardian of his cousin, Gian Galeazzo Sforza, was refusing to surrender the regency when the time fell due. Gian Galeazzo had married Isabel of Aragon, a lady related to the dynasty ruling in Naples. She accordingly appealed to Naples for help in securing possession of her husband's inheritance; whereupon Ludovico the Moor turned to Charles the Eighth, son of the terrible Louis the Eleventh of France, inviting him to invade Italy and seize the crown of Naples, on which the French king held claims as heir of the Anjous.

Italy was a vast network of plots and counter-plots, and Alexander the Sixth had to manœuvre with the greatest agility, now combatting Naples, now allying himself with the King of that Realm, now disputing the claims of Charles the Eighth, now conceding them in public while resisting them in secret. Though Cesare Borgia was barely seventeen years old his father had taken him into his house and counsel, keeping him in touch with the intrigues of Italian political life and setting great store on the boy's suggestions.

"To judge by the letters they have left us," Enciso explained, "these young Borgias were astonishingly precocious children. I am thinking of course of Cesare and Lucretia—Geoffrey Borgia was an insignificant individual wholly absorbed in amusement and vain display. Giovanni, the elder, was a handsome fellow,

but blustering and fatuous. A man of great political talent himself, Rodrigo turned to Lucretia for advice when she was fourteen years old. Cesare had studied at Perugia with two comrades, who also, at his father's request, acted as his guardians. Both were Spaniards: Juan Vera, a native of Valencia, a man of mature years, serving as a sort of governor; and Francisco Remolino, from Ilerda, a youth of Cesare's own age. Cesare was interested especially in literary studies and was something of a poet. He was still a student when his father assumed the tiara, and he did not take the trouble to return to Rome till the following year. That same Bocciardo, the Ambassador from Ferrara, who accurately analyzed the forces at play in the Conclave which elected Alexander the Sixth, was a great friend of Cesare Borgia. He describes him as a nobleman of worldly fashion despite his title as Archbishop of Valencia and his imminent elevation to the Cardinalate. He went about clad in silks or in costly hunting costumes, always with a sword at his belt. A mere wisp of hair cut close to the scalp did service as the required ecclesiastical tonsure. Bocciardo praises the good-nature and vivacious humor of the young man, along with a certain modesty in conversation which made him much more popular than his brother Giovanni, Duke of Gandia. One would think Bocciardo were describing a man of thirty-five or forty, so astute were the observations on public affairs which he attributes to Cesare Borgia—as I said, the latter at that time was seventeen years old."

To hold his ground against the Italian sovereigns, and protect the interests of the Church at the same time, Alexander had to make alliances. The King of Naples was his most dangerous foe, and he tried to fortify himself in that direction by marriages of his children.

"In following that policy," Claudio remarked, "he was only imitating his friend, Ferdinand the Catholic. Ferdinand married his daughters here and there about Europe for political reasons only, and without consulting their preferences or worrying to any great extent about their domestic happiness. The fate of Joan the Mad who married Philip the Fair, and of Catherine of Aragon,

who married Henry the Eighth of England, illustrate the private sorrows that are sometimes caused by such heartless diplomacy."

Before he was Pope, Cardinal Borgia had sought marriages for Lucretia which he judged would increase the influence of the Borgia family. He was then in close touch with powerful nobles of Valencia, and had promised Lucretia's hand, when she was eight years old, to don Querubín de Centelles, Lord of Ayora. When she was eleven years old he offered her to don Gaspar de Prócida, Count of Almenara. Had Rodrigo never reached the Papal throne, Lucretia Borgia would have married one or the other of these noblemen in Valencia, and returned to her native land to live a commonplace life as a respectable wife and mother, rearing many children, and turning to austere devotions as her beauty and her youth waned.

"And that," said Enciso, "may perhaps have been her true vocation, in spite of her brilliant social career and the lofty eminence she attained as consort of a reigning prince. She regularly wore sack-cloth under her silken garments, and died in childbirth after rearing a large family.

"But her father's election diverted the course of her life far from the shores of Spain. Alexander could no longer think of wasting Lucretia so far away from home. He had only one daughter, and such a precious diplomatic instrument had to be used very sparingly! He paid the Count of Almenara a consolation fee of some sixty thousand modern dollars, to procure the annulment of the engagement which had been formally contracted. Then he married Lucretia to Giovanni Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, a tiny feudal domain belonging to the Holy See on the Adriatic. To tell the truth this match was in itself no more alluring than the two preceding; but the unpretentious Lord of Pesaro was nephew to Ascanio Sforza, Rodrigo's friend in the Sacred College, and nephew likewise to Ludovico the Moor, despot of Milan, who had good reason for sustaining the Papacy against Naples. The marriage took place in February, in the year 1493, with a stipulation that the bride and groom were not to see each other till at least a year had passed. Lucretia was then

barely thirteen years old. Her husband was twenty-six. He appeared by proxy at the ceremony in Rome, remaining personally in his court at Pesaro, where the event was celebrated with great festivities.

"The Pope's Legate in Pesaro, a Bishop of the Church, presided over the ball which was held in the Castle. The dancing lasted till daybreak, and then the Bishop transferred them to the public streets, leading a chain of guests in the movements of the *farandole* from one end of the city to the other. The modern mind can hardly grasp such a spectacle: a Papal Nuncio clad in his violet, 'calling' an all-night dance, and then hopping at the head of a riotous company of damsels and cavaliers about the streets of a town between crowds of commoners and plebeians who added their applause and acclamation to the rejoicing! Yet at the time everyone thought it the most jovial thing in the world! We cannot judge people and things in the past without entering into their spirit and coming to feel as they felt."

The King of Naples pricked up his ears at news of this union between Lucretia Borgia and a Sforza, which meant an alliance between the Papacy and the Duchy of Milan. Don Ferrante thought at once of a counter-move to restore his friendship with Alexander the Sixth. He suggested a marriage between Cesare Borgia and one of his own natural daughters. Two bastards, regularly adopted and generously endowed, might well serve the purposes of a diplomatic alliance in an age when many sovereign potentates could boast of births no more regular. The King of Naples was a bastard son of Alfonso the Magnanimous. It was, furthermore, no secret that Cesare Borgia, Archbishop of Valencia, felt little calling for an ecclesiastical career. His father had been blindly following a family tradition: Giovanni Borgia should be the soldier, as Pedro Luís had been during the reign of Calixtus the Third; Cesare, the second son, should be a Cardinal as he, Rodrigo, had been in his uncle's time! But Cesare, clearly the most talented of any of the younger Borgias, was applying himself to military training despite his high offices in the Church; and he soon came to be, as his father had been before

him, the best horseman in Rome. Likewise following in his father's footsteps, and as handsome a youth as Rodrigo had been, he began his career in love at the age of eighteen, tempted already by the licentious atmosphere about him and by the attraction he already had for women. To women he owes most of the names that later panegyrists were to attach to his memory: "the blond Cæsar," "our Cæsar," "the only Cæsar."

Relations between Naples and the Holy See had been in this state of precarious balance ever since the pontificate of Calixtus the Third; and Alexander the Sixth continued the policy of balancing powers. Whenever the Pope became involved in difficulties, the King of Naples would turn against him. If the Pope won a point and appeared with strong support, Naples would at once make concessions to regain the friendship of Rome.

Under the influence of Ascanio Sforza, and with a natural eagerness to recover such possessions as had been usurped by the Neapolitan dynasty at the expense of the Holy See, Pope Borgia entered an alliance with Venice, Milan, and minor Italian States. The purpose of the league was to raise troops to attack Virginio Orsini and wrest from him the properites fraudulently expropriated by Civo, the son of Innocent the Eighth. To cement the coalition in which Ludovico the Moor represented the greatest effective strength, the real marriage between Lucretia and Giovanni Sforza was hastened. It took place in the month of June, long before the expiration of the year's delay which had been stipulated in the marriage contract. The event was celebrated by one of the most famous banquets of the time.

Giovanni Sforza entered Rome at the head of a brilliant cortège, riding between his two brothers-in-law, Giovanni and Cesare, who had gone out beyond the city walls to welcome him. Lucretia saw him come riding by from a balcony of her palace at *Santa Maria in Portico,* where she was living with Adriana, her former governess, and *la bella Giulia,* her maid-of-honor. The Lord of Pesaro, a magnificent horseman, gracefully doffed his hat before her, and she returned the greeting to this husband whom she was seeing for the first time.

A hundred and fifty ladies of the Roman aristocracy, all the Ambassadors, the notables of the city, eleven Cardinals, and countless Bishops, attended the feast in the *Belvedere* of the Vatican. Among the guests was Teodorina, a daughter of Innocent the Eighth, and her daughter, the Marquise Gerace. The children of defunct Popes continued holding honored stations at the Courts of succeeding Pontiffs. Their situation was somewhat comparable to that occupied by ex-Presidents and their families in the republics of our day: unless there be some positive animosity to prevent, they continue to appear at all functions given by their successors. Prominent also at this banquet was the whole tribe of the Farnesi which had come as escort to *la bella Giulia.* For once the two pontifical families found themselves breaking bread together—the old family and the new family, the one descending from *la Vannozza* and the other developing about *la Farnesina.*

The merry-making lasted till late into the night and was followed by theatrical productions, comic and tragic, by recitations from poets, and finally by lascivious dances calculated to enflame amorous emotions in the guests. The last course was served at four o'clock in the morning and consisted of fifty silver bowls filled with sweetmeats. Infesura, an implacable enemy of the Borgias, relates in his account of the event that it was the Pope himself who ordered the bonbons to be poured down the corsages of the female guests. Each lady had a Cardinal or a potentate at her side, since the manners of the times required the separation of husband and wife at table. Each gentleman was left free, accordingly, to extract the almonds from the gown he found nearest at hand, the operation, as the chronicle says, giving rise to "uproarious laughter and immoderate palpings of breasts." Ambassadors who were actually present, and did not write from hearsay as Infesura did, reported to their home governments that the banquet lasted till dawn and that everyone had a good time. They did not recount anything in particular to distinguish it from other celebrations of the period.

However, the marriage between the two young people con-

tinued a mere formality. The Pope decided that his daughter was still too young to found a family, and suggested that the contract be upheld, promising that at the end of the year Lucretia would be sent to Pesaro to live with her husband. For his part, Giovanni Sforza was in no hurry to obligate himself, as was shortly apparent. When Lucretia finally went to Pesaro, she filed formal complaint that she "had not been 'served' by her husband as she had a right to expect," and the marriage was eventually annulled on proof that it had never been consummated. This was the beginning of the matrimonial adventures of the famous Lucretia Borgia, described by the enemies of her family as a monster unheard of since the days of Messalina, and slandered by the lies of her first husband, desirous of getting even for the insult to his manhood which the annulment constituted.

"For more than three centuries," Enciso concluded, "the world has thought this woman a criminal; yet she was a girl of gentle disposition with almost no will of her own. It was as though all the family energy, all the flaming passions and boiling rages of the Borgias, flowed in the veins of the male members of the line."

"It was Victor Hugo," added Borja, "who rather carelessly established the legend of Lucretia the Monster which had been invented by pamphleteers in the service of the feudal lords, the Roveres, and other enemies of Alexander the Sixth. In reality she had a girl's natural vanity to see her beauty and her pretty gowns admired. But she married and divorced as the policies of her father demanded, as any dutiful daughter of the period would have done. In the whole course of her life she may have had one or two serious love affairs, but no more. Fortunately, this truth has been resurrected in our own days by the patient efforts of historians. Only in cheap novels can we now find the melodramatic Lucretia Borgia whom we knew as children. The rehabilitation of this Borgian princess was the work of two Protestants, the Englishman Roscoe, and the German Gregorovius, who turned directly to the documents of the time. They recovered her true likeness, which was rather that of one of the

Graces of old than of the bloodthirsty Fury, going about with a dagger and a phial of poisons, which had been fashioned by the enemies of the Borgias."

Énciso de las Casas had read the original papers himself. Lucretia affected for the most part gowns of pure white with broad gold borders, loose flowing sleeves drawn in at the wrists with bracelets, in Spanish style, and, around her throat, a necklace of wonderful pearls. Pearls were always her delight and her aspiration, as was the case with her brother Cesare; though neither of them equalled their parent in enthusiasm for such precious gems. On many occasions, on coming to their audiences with the Pontiff, Ambassadors would find him standing at a window feasting his eyes on the iridescence of some necklace he was about to give to Lucretia. And when the Pope's daughter became Duchess of Ferrara one of her greatest joys was to inherit the famous necklace of pearls and rubies which had belonged to her mother-in-law.

All writers of the time praised Lucretia's beauty of feature, her graceful figure, her mouth rather too large—a trait of the Borgias—but with fresh thick lips, her brilliant teeth, her full white breasts (in large part visible in accord with a fashion of the time), but above all else her kindly joyous smile. This buoyant good humor she inherited from her father, who was rarely downcast even at critical moments in his life, and was never grim even in his lusts. As her figure rounded out with the years, she never lost a certain aristocratic lightness of movement. There was something bland about her, the reflection doubtless of a weak volition, without initiative. Superficial, light, spineless, incapable of resisting events, yielding to them rather, seeking happiness in momentary satisfactions of vanity, without energy to go beyond the enjoyments of the moment, Lucretia was ever a docile instrument in the hands of her family, living as a slave to her environment, and doing as people about her did.

But if she failed to inherit the wilfulness of the Borgias she possessed their talent. During her father's lifetime she showed considerable aptitude for political affairs and even governed cer-

tain fiefs of the Church in the Pontiff's absence. Left in Ferrara, on Alexander's death, as wife to a rough soldier, Prince Alfonso d'Este, the Pope's daughter became "the pearl of brides," "the triumphant princess," "the holy Madonna Lucretia." The poet Ariosto sang her virtues. Titian, the painter, knew her well, and admired her. She was just a woman and a wife, devoted to her children and to the management of her household, holding herself resigned and good humored before the infidelities of a rough and gruff husband who at bottom adored her.

Claudio liked to think of her as the girl identified as the model who sat for Pinturicchio's Saint Catherine—a graceful girlish face suggesting indolence perhaps, framed by a magnificent shock of bright blonde hair that looked like a halo of molten gold.

"On some occasions," he said, "Madonna Lucrezia, or as the Pope said, in his habitual Spanish fashion, 'doña Lucrecia, my daughter,' held this luxuriant mass in a golden net with a gem set in each corner of its meshes. At other times, in pride at such glory, she would turn her tresses loose to fall in a torrent along her body to her feet. A braid of this golden fire, the relic of a true Spanish-Italian beauty, is still preserved in a library at Milan. Its brilliant color has defied the passage of time. Three centuries after Lucretia's death, it was to throw Lord Byron into a deep poetic reverie."

Enciso smiled sceptically:

"I am sorry to spoil the story, my dear Borja, but this attractive ancestor of yours was not a blonde. She was a Valencian brunette with that flat, lustreless, rice-colored pallor of skin so common in the brunettes of the South. Cesare Borgia must likewise have had black hair, though the ladies of the day called him their 'blonde Cæsar.' At the most, Lucretia's may have been chestnut brown. But this did not prevent her from being blonde, a Venetian blonde, a blonde of liquid gold—poets and painters vied with each other in glorifying her flame-like tresses! But have things changed much in our time? Our ladies are surely aware that they have dyed their hair; yet they accept in good faith the praises of people quite as well informed as they as to their orig-

inal colors. We live on conventions and illusions! What would we do if there were nothing but truth in the world?"

Alchemists of those days set a high price on recipes for golden hair. In Spain, our famous "Mother Celestina" taught her pupils the use of a "golden bleach" to fill out other tricks of the trade. All the ladies of the time were blondes, even that valorous tomboy, Catarina Sforza, whose gesture with her skirts on a famous occasion has come down through history as a sublime witticism. In fact, among papers of this Sforza Amazon which have survived to our time may be found a recipe for bleaching hair written out by herself in her own hand, that no other woman might obtain it. It calls for a mixture of wood-ash and barley straw boiled in water for twenty-four hours; the lye then to be drained off and boiled for twelve hours more with flowers and walnut leaves. One washing of the hair in this fluid the following morning was sufficient to give it a golden hue, though it had to be dried in the sunlight, with all the incidental dangers of catching cold—whereat Madonna Lucrezia not infrequently complained.

"This treatment was one of the particular concerns of the Pope's daughter. She washed and dried her curls at least once a week. When she left Rome for the last time on her journey to meet her third and final husband at Ferrara, she spent twenty-seven days on the road. Every five days the slowly and majestically advancing procession halted in some village that Milady Lucrece might 'wash her head'; and princes, Ambassadors, knights, squires, maids-of-honor, men-at-arms, would stand about clicking their heels all day while the new Princess of Ferrara would be sitting somewhere in the sunlight, her figure wrapped from neck to feet in a white silken smock, exceedingly thin and light (called a *schiavonetto*), and on her head a broad-brimmed hat made without a crown, through which her tresses were passed that the sun might play freely upon them without tanning her neck or hurting her eyes. Coquette that she was, Lucretia claimed that this weekly session was necessary to relieve a chronic headache. It is evident, to the contrary, that baking in the hot sun must have

been the cause rather than the cure, or, at any rate, made such a malady worse.

"It is certain that Cesare Borgia also dyed his beard—for that maxillary adornment had just come into fashion again. In the days of the Borgias young men were letting their beards grow in contradistinction to their fathers, who all through the Fifteenth century had maintained the smooth face sanctioned by Roman Antiquity. It was the Humanists who first revived the fashion of the full beard, in imitation of the Greek poets and philosophers. Its adoption by Charles the Fifth and Francis the First made it general throughout Europe again."

"Lucretia Borgia," Enciso continued, "was every bit a woman, enamoured of pretty things, whether gowns or jewels. No lady of her time could boast of such a wardrobe, and any one of her costumes was worth a fortune, in the terms of her day. Indolent, passive, unassertive, she was a person, nevertheless, of remarkable intellectual gifts. She read, wrote and spoke Italian, French, Greek and Latin, not to mention Castilian and Valencian, which were her mother-tongues. She also knew some German, though her proficiency in that language was never as great as in the others. In some of these she wrote very passable verse. All the members of this vigorous, active clan seem to have had a dash of poetry. Cesare read and composed verse at the University of Perugia, while doña Tecla de Borja, a sister of Alexander the Sixth, was enough of a poet to win the praises of Ausius March, the famous Catalonian troubadour. On her death all the poets in Italy burst into versified tears."

This allusion reminded Claudio of his uncle, the Canon Figueras. Tecla de Borja was the *Tecleta* who figured in so many of the Canon's stories as playing with her brother, *Rodriguet,* the future Pope, in the Borja manor at Játiva.

But Enciso had drifted back to the political adventures of Alexander the Sixth.

"The King of Naples grew alarmed on finding the Pope allied with his adversaries, and sought aid of his illegitimate cousin, Ferdinand the Catholic, that the latter might exert some pressure

on the policies of the Vatican. Taking improper advantage of the Pope's nationality, Ferdinand reminded Alexander that as a Spaniard he was a liegeman of the Spanish Crown, and served notice through the Spanish Ambassador in Rome that since the dynasty of Naples was the creation of his uncle, Alfonso the Magnanimous, he, Ferdinand, considered it as part and parcel of his own family. It is only fair to remember that at first Rodrigo Borgia had a real affection for Ferdinand and Isabel, sovereigns of rather dubious legitimacy, whom he had helped personally in the early days of their marriage, when they were only princes. The moment he ascended the Papal throne, he recognized the fall of Granada by bestowing on them the title of 'Catholic Sovereigns,' which has become hereditary to this day among the monarchs of Spain; and everything that Ferdinand asked of him he made haste to grant, among other things, the Masterships of the military Orders, which carried conspicuous incomes with them. Pope Borgia always gave the Catholic Sovereigns more than they gave him. It was continual pestering on Ferdinand's part that finally inclined Alexander, on the advice of Cesare Borgia, to turn toward the King of France, who was more deferential toward the Pope and other members of the Borgia family.

"Alexander admired Isabel as one of the most beautiful and virtuous among the great ladies of her time. With a woman's devotion to fine clothes and costly gems, she was above reproach on the side of her private life and even pushed her scruples to extremes of austerity. Whenever her husband was absent, even for a night, she would have her bed set up in a great hall and sleep there surrounded by her children and ladies of her court—'Maids of the Coverlet,' *cobijeras,* they were called, since it was their function to supervise the slumber of the sovereign. Such precautions kept her ever free from gossip at a time when scandal was the rule rather than the exception among the powerful. In the heroes who fought the Moors under her command she inspired ideal, romantically hopeless passions. They all professed chivalrous, uncarnal love for this beautiful 'Lady of their

Thoughts,' a queen authentically blonde, with great, deep, blue eyes.

"With Ferdinand, the Pope was on terms of roguish intimacy. He would often make jocose allusion to the growth of the King's illegitimate family, which bade fair to overtake his own; and he looked after the bastards of the Spanish royal house, making one of them Archbishop of Saragossa, when he himself was only Vice-Chancellor and the future King still heir-pretender to the crown of Aragon. As time went on, other royal princes 'on the left' came to possess ecclesiastical benefices, while daughters found comfortable berths in convents.

"On this occasion the new Pontiff unselfishly yielded to the pressure of the Catholic monarch. His real interests would have counselled fidelity to his alliance with Milan and Venice, behind which the King of France lurked in hiding. The combination in the North was a serious menace, for Charles the Eighth was gathering a large force to invade Italy and seize the Kingdom of Naples. The austere Savonarola, who was a good deal of a charlatan, as most prophets are, had been secretly informed of the French expedition and kept predicting it in his sermons as a revelation which God had made to him for the punishment of the Pope and of the tyrant ruling in Naples.

"It was at this critical moment that Ferdinand asked Pope Borgia to abandon the stronger party and side with a monarch who was about to lose his throne. Alexander accepted, nevertheless, and the two kings tried to compensate him for his rash decision by seductive offers. Geoffrey Borgia, the youngest of the Pope's children, would marry doña Sancha, a natural daughter of Alfonso of Aragon, heir-apparent to the Neapolitan crown, who would bring in dowry the principality of Squillace and the county of Cagliata in Calabria. Ferdinand, on his side, proposed that Giovanni Borgia, second Duke of Gandia, marry doña Maria Enriquez, his own cousin, who had been affianced of yore to the late Pedro Luís, first Duke of Gandia (Alexander's first illegitimate child). Meantime don Ferrante of Naples strove to smooth out the quarrels he had previously been hatching between

one individual or another and the Pope. Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere made peace with Alexander and sat down with cynical readiness at the Pope's table. Virginio Orsini likewise made advances and, at the King's bidding, paid over thirty-five thousand ducats for the title to the Church lands he had 'bought' of Franceschetto Civo. It was a love-feast all around, and Giovanni Borgia set sail on a Spanish galley with princely retinue and a great treasure in jewels, to celebrate his wedding with Ferdinand's cousin at Valencia. A few days later Geoffrey Borgia was married by proxy to doña Sancha de Aragon, the actual consummation of the wedding being postponed, as had been done in the case of Lucretia; for Sancha was fourteen years old and Geoffrey twelve! In all this, the Pope had been confronted with two alternatives: on the one hand, the danger of a French invasion, still remote; on the other, the more immediate threat of an invasion of the Papal States by the King of Naples, secretly supported by the King of Spain. He had optioned, in the end, to exorcise the latter, since by doing so, he could obtain brilliant matches for two of his sons.

"At just this juncture an envoy from Charles the Eighth arrived in Rome to secure from the Pontiff, whom the French King still regarded as an ally, the investiture of the Kingdom of Naples. This would have justified the French attack. But Alexander was already compromised beyond recall with the Neapolitan monarch. He could only put the Ambassador off with detours and vague promises.

"The Pope had married three of his children, Lucretia, Geoffrey, and the Duke of Gandia, all in one year; and the enormous expenses incident to the ceremonies had all but emptied his treasury. The only money he had in sight was the thirty-five thousand ducats paid by Virginio Orsini, and they had come, when all was said and done, from Naples. In this emergency he had recourse to a device used before him by other Popes: wholesale promotions to the Sacred College. He created eleven Cardinals at a Consistory which met in the month of September, 1493. Two of them paid nothing for their new honors, since

they belonged to the Pope's own family: the one, Alessandro Farnese, the future Paul the Third; and the other, Cesare Borgia, who was just eighteen years old on donning the purple. The public paid little attention to the nomination of Cesare—that was a natural manifestation of paternal regard, such as other Popes had shown. Not so the brother of *la bella Giulia,* who had made his way into the Sacred College by the shadiest and the most devious of routes! The jests and comments were endless. It was at this time that Farnese acquired his sobriquet as 'Cardinal Petticoats.'

"The extraordinary career of this Borgia Pope," Enciso remarked, "shows a strange mixture of the petty with the grand; of the trivial or obscene with the marvellous and the historic. One day Alexander received news that 'a man named Christopher Columbus' had set out from Spain with three ships and a handful of Spaniards to reach the lands of the Grand Khan of Tartary in the farthest East by sailing West across the Ocean; and that the said Columbus had actually reached outlying islands of the eastern world and come home again with specimens of gold and spice. And people began arguing at once as to whether these new lands, inhabited by naked savages and showing only a rudimentary civilization, really belonged to Asia or to some entirely new world which no one had ever visited before.

"Alexander was not a scientist; but as a youth he had read widely and filled his library with all the books, whether printed or in manuscript, which were famous at the time. He had often discussed cosmography with Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, the Pope whose treatises on geography Columbus had read in making preparations for his voyage. Alexander at once took an interest in the new lands and organized, under the leadership of Father Boïl, a Catalonian monk, a mission of Spanish friars to convert them to Christianity. But just before that the Pope had demonstrated his title to credit as the real Pope of Discovery by dispatching a party of missionaries to rediscover and reconvert Greenland. The land lying to the extreme north of America had been known to Scandinavian sailors as early as the Tenth

century and they had actually founded Christian missions there (destined to perish in the end). It was during the first months of Alexander's pontificate, at the very time when Spanish friars were rearing temples of masonry and brick under the tropical sun of the Antilles, that Catholic missionaries set out again for the cold North to raise their poor wooden churches in the Arctic Seas."

As Claudio seemed about to interrupt, Enciso anticipated his thought:

"Yes, I know what you are going to say. It was in fact Rodrigo Borgia who made the greatest division of territories known to the world's history. In all the period between Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte, no conqueror ever cut up the face of the earth in so offhand a fashion or marked off greater territories on the earth's surface with a dash of the pen. At the time, sailors from the Iberian Peninsula were darting out into all the unknown world, the Portuguese sailing East, the Spaniards West, but both of them looking for the so-called Indies, the marvellous lands of the Grand Khan described by Marco Polo and Mandeville. Columbus's discovery filled the Portuguese with alarm, and relations between the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal were growing seriously strained. If the two states were not to be thrown into future wars, some agreement had to be reached, whereby their respective zones of discovery would be clearly defined. In the light of his own readings and of the counsel of expert geographers and sailors, Pope Borgia drew, strangely enough, a line from North to South to the westward of the Cape Verde Islands, dividing the terraqueous globe, as he thought, into two hemispheres, everything to the East of the 'Alexandrine Line' being for the Portuguese, everything to the West, for the Spaniards. Both could go sailing on, if they chose, provided they kept to the prescribed route, until they met on the opposite side of the planet."

Enciso, however, in deference to his Spanish patriotism, hastened to discount the importance of the Pope's partition:

"Many authors abroad, who do not know our history as well

as we do, have thought that the Pope took a very radical step in the field of science in thus dividing the world; and it does seem to be a fact that this act of Pope Borgia is the first official recognition of the sphericity of the Earth on the part of the Church of Rome. None of the Popes preceding had ever adverted to the point. But more praise than that he does not deserve. It would seem to imply that people at the time did not believe that the world was round and that the discovery of that fact was made by Columbus and the sages of the Vatican. As you well know, centuries before the Christian era, Ptolemy and Eratosthenes had proved the sphericity of the earth and actually measured its circumference in figures fairly close to the dimensions established by modern science. Later on the Moorish geographer Alfagram restated and re-verified the proof. The Moors of Spain had been teaching the doctrine of sphericity in their schools for centuries, and, through the Spanish Jews, Arab geography had become a commonplace with the scientists of the Christian world. To be sure, in the early centuries of Church history, some of the Fathers had denied the possibility of antipodes and regarded the doctrine of sphericity as absurd. The mystical geography of the Byzantine monk, Cosmos Indicopleustes, was widely diffused in the earlier Middle Ages. But beginning with the Thirteenth century, the dawn of the Renaissance, it was in Spain, a country of Jews, Christians, and Moors, that widest acceptance of the so-called 'sphere' prevailed.

"Instead of being the victim of Spanish ignorance, as many writers have carelessly supposed, Columbus was the ignorant person as compared with the scholars who had occasion to pass on his plans. Columbus was not so certain the world was spherical. He thought rather that it was pear-shaped, with the Earthly Paradise located on the narrow end where the stem would be. He also thought that, of the seven parts of the world, six were land and one water. Indeed, when some Spanish churchmen were criticising Columbus's project of going westward to Asia on traditional grounds, citing the authority of Saint Augustine and other sacred writers who had denied that the world was

a sphere, a Spanish bishop replied sharply: 'Saint Augustine and other most worshipful saints are authorities in theological matters; but they can in no sense be so regarded in matters of geography.'"

There was a moment's silence and then Claudio observed thoughtfully:

"In any event, it was an interesting and pretty gesture on the part of Lucretia Borgia's father to cut the world into two chunks that way. It shows the prestige the Papacy still enjoyed in spite of the private lives of Borgia and many of his predecessors. Alexander cut the world in two as simply as he would have halved an apple on his table! The Pope was still somebody! But unluckily for him, a little Augustinian friar was just then beginning to stir around in Germany—a man named Martin Luther!"

CHAPTER V

The War of Fornication

ENCISO stepped to one of the windows of his library and looked out into the street.

"It's raining!" he said. "You had better not go out just now! Let's have another cigar!"

In fact, streets and roof-tops were shining under a thick, fine rain that prematurely darkened the sky of the late afternoon. Claudio had risen to take his departure. He sat down in his chair again, touching a match to a big cigar which the diplomat offered him. He might stay at the most a half-hour longer, to see whether the shower might pass!

"The year 1494," said Enciso, after a period of silence, "proved to be the most dangerous of Pope Borgia's career. Toward the end of February, King don Ferrante, the Valencian bastard who had become head of the Aragonese dynasty in Naples, suddenly died, and his heir, Alfonso the Second, hastened to seek aid of the Pope, the only sovereign in Italy who was in a position to help him. The young man was greatly worried by the expedition of Charles the Eighth. He would be embarrassed in meeting it, because of the hostility of the nobility and the populace of Naples, whom his father had alienated by harsh measures.

"Again Alexander found himself in a painful dilemma. The King of France was sending ambassadors, threatening to call a Church Council and deprive him of the tiara in case he did not join France. Giuliano della Rovere had turned away from Naples and was beginning to work for the French monarch. Meantime, the Pope was in danger of losing his most intimate friend, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, who was bound to the French cause through his blood-relationship to the tyrant of Milan. Borgia tried ineffectually to gain time on the one hand by send-

ing the Golden Rose to Charles the Eighth in token of friendship, and on the other, by promising to accord investiture to the new King of Naples in order to placate Ferdinand the Catholic. Alfonso understood the Pope's predicament and saw that Alexander would have gained the more by deserting the Neapolitan dynasty. He therefore ratified the agreements his father had reached with the Borgias, even making them more attractive than they had been. Doña Sancha would marry the little Geoffrey Borgia and bring him, in addition to the principality of Squillace, forty thousand ducats' income and a regiment of a hundred men-at-arms for her personal guard. Sancha's dowry would be two hundred thousand ducats. Giovanni, Duke of Gandia, Alexander's eldest son, would receive the principality of Tricarico, in the Basilicata, from the King's hands; and on Cesare Borgia, who had just become a Sub-deacon quite unwillingly, would be bestowed a number of lucrative benefices in Neapolitan territory.

"In April, the Pope sided resolutely with Naples and ordered his nephew, Giovanni Borgia, Cardinal of Monreale, to place the crown on Alfonso's head. Geoffrey Borgia went in the retinue of the Cardinal to consummate his marriage with doña Sancha. Five days later, on the night of the twenty-fourth of April, Giuliano della Rovere put to sea from Ostia, leaving his brother Giovanni to defend the castle at the entrance to the Tiber. He made Genoa and thence passed on to France as envoy of Ludovico the Moor, to urge Charles the Eighth to hasten the invasion. Alexander called Count Pitigliano to Rome and ordered him to lay siege to the castle at Ostia; and though the fortress was generally regarded as impregnable it fell in a month's time.

"For several weeks the Pope had ample satisfaction for his paternal vanities and was free to enjoy the delights of a moment's peace which crept as a sort of breathing space into the rush of events in that dangerous year.

"Geoffrey's wedding took place at Naples, with great display, on the seventh of May. The bride's father seized this oppor-

tunity to gain prestige with populace and nobility and inspire confidence in those who were faltering, by giving great splendor to the nuptial ceremonies, as a means of suggesting that his alliance with the Pope was adequate guaranty against the French invasion."

Claudio had seen a letter written by the Cardinal of Monreale to one of his Valencian friends, Juan Marrades, at the time personal chamberlain to the Pope. It described the wedding in detail, that Marrades might transmit the news to the Duke of Gandia, then resident in Valencia. The Canon Figueras had unearthed the document in the archives of the Cathedral and pointed out to Claudio the mirthful crudeness with which the story of the wedding was related in spicy Valencian phrases.

"The customs of the time," said Claudio, "were much less fastidious than those we know today. You mentioned a Papal Nuncio presiding over an all-night dance and leading the last *farandole* out into the streets of Pesaro. In this case Cardinal Giovanni Borgia led the bride's father and mother and other members of the family to the marriage chamber, where the bride and bridegroom were already in bed. This visit was part of the ritual in all aristocratic weddings, the situation of the newly-weds furnished occasion for broad jest and much laughter on the part of all present. In this case Cardinal Giovanni was much pleased with the self-possession and evident aptitude of his cousin Geoffrey, though the latter was barely fourteen years old. His letter testifies that he left the bridal apartment convinced that the new Prince of Squillace 'was joyous of humor and well-prepared for his marital responsibilities.' In this the Cardinal-Legate was under-estimating not so much the preparation as the responsibilities. The youngest of the Borgias soon discovered that he had fallen into the clutches of one of the most insatiable of women. Doña Sancha, a woman of Neapolitan and Spanish blood, died before she was twenty-six years old of sheer exhaustion through amorous excesses."

"To this Sancha," said Claudio, "must be traced the evil reputation which rested on the passive and gracious Lucretia over a

period of three centuries. In order to discredit the Borgia family, Alexander's enemies attributed to his daughter the debaucheries of his daughter-in-law, and the writers of the Reformation, prey to their religious hatreds, were at no pains to correct the error. When, two years after their marriage, the Prince and Princess of Squillace returned from Naples to Rome to take up residence in the Vatican, doña Sancha was in the full blaze of her precociously perverse temperament. She set no bounds to her dissoluteness and seemed to find added zest for her pleasures in the scandal they provoked. She made public parade of her affairs with her two brothers-in-law, Giovanni and Cesare; and whatever the reserves of which they were conscious, they proved vain before Sancha's cynical delight in boasting of her escapades to all the world. Her one restraint in a career which seems to have embraced most of the prominent dignitaries, whether ecclesiastical or lay, about the Papal Court, was never to set her cap for her father-in-law, the Pope—in spite of his advancing years, Alexander was still the good-natured dandy and *viveur* he had always shown himself in the gay life of the Vatican. In reality, Alexander was shocked at the effronteries of his daughter-in-law, perhaps because of the sad situation in which they placed Geoffrey, his son. That young man seemed to be satisfied so long as the Fury he had married left him alone—she was ever reviling him for his moderation in lust. In his later days, the Pope lost patience and shut the woman up in the Castle of Sant' Angelo, in order to put an end to the ribald comments to which her ostentatious immodesties continually exposed the Court of Rome.

"The day after this wedding, the Cardinal of Monreale crowned Alfonso the Second in a ceremony of great splendor—and the Pope immediately found that he had stirred up a hornets' nest! Ascanio Sforza now deserted him, as Rovere had done. The two Cardinals had always been implacable foes. Now they came to an understanding to oppose the Pope—Giuliano, as a protégé of the King of France, Ascanio as brother to Ludovico Sforza, tyrant of Milan. But Alexander's own house was thrown into sudden confusion. Under suasion of Cardinal Sforza, all the

Roman gentry who had received states in fief from the Holy See rose in rebellion—the Colonnas, the Orsinis, the Savellis, and numberless others, and made common cause with Milan and Charles the Eighth. At this moment more than half of Italy stood in arms against the Pope, his one support being the King of Naples, who was really leaning on him, since the plebs and the barons of Naples could be relied on to revolt the moment the French army drew near.

"Alexander now perceived that he had embarked on a mistaken policy, though really he had understood it all along. A desire to favor the King of Spain had been more influential with him than even his ambitions for his children. At this critical juncture Ferdinand was sending protestations of friendship and prayers for the Pope's salvation, but without soldier or penny to give them point.

"Alexander's first thought in the crisis was for the safety of his family. Lucretia Borgia was living in Pesaro with her husband; for Giovanni Sforza, nephew to the Duke of Milan, could not remain in Rome a moment after the Pope had deserted the league of the Milanese and the Venetians to join the King of Naples. The young man thought it safer to be at some distance from the Eternal City, on land of his own; and Alexander permitted him to take his wife with him. Looking forward to the coming invasion, the Pope could well fear for *la bella Giulia, la Vannozza,* doña Adriana de Milá, and the other women of his entourage. They followed Lucretia to Pesaro on pretext of passing the summer on the Adriatic shore. The only one of the children to remain in Rome was Cesare, who stood at his father's side with a composure and clear-headedness quite improper to his years.

"The Pope then began to take desperate measures to meet the on-coming storm. Venice had important interests involved in the Levant. Alexander therefore sent a secret agent, a certain Bocciardo, to the Grand Turk, urging him to advise the Government at Venice to take the side of Naples. The fact that the Pope still had the Pretender, Djem, in his power, gave a certain

force to this request. At the same time Bocciardo begged Bajazet, the chief of Islam, to advance a year's payment on his brother's board in Rome—the pension of forty thousand ducats would come in very handy in defending the Church from the French invasion. Meantime, Charles the Eighth was cloaking his warlike preparations under a counterfeit air of devoutness. After occupying the Kingdom of Naples he intended, he said, to go on to Constantinople and Jerusalem—the ever-recurring dream of the Crusade—though neither he nor one of his captains had any idea of keeping such a promise.

"The Pope met Alfonso in conference on the Neapolitan frontier to examine ways and means of resisting the invaders by arms. Alexander and the young Cardinal Cesare were for taking the offensive and attacking the French while their army would be more or less scattered on the march. But Alfonso was afraid to strip his Kingdom of his scanty troops, lest the country rise in revolt behind him.

"The French King crossed the frontier of Savoy on the third of September, at the head of fifteen thousand knights and men-at-arms, eight thousand Gascon musketeers, six thousand Swiss halberdiers, fifteen hundred French crossbow men, and a hundred and fifty pieces of artillery. This agglomeration of armed men, the largest that had ever been seen in the memory of people of those days, had neither tents, nor provisions, nor money. The troops were to live on the cities they conquered—Italy was a land of plenty! This mob of Frenchmen made its way southward in the same state of mind in which the hungry and tattered regiments of the Republic, three centuries later, were to look down from the passes of the Alps upon the promised land pointed out to them by the youthful Buonaparte.

"Charles the Eighth, degenerate scion of the terrible Louis the Eleventh, was an ugly, bandy-legged, unintelligent creature, prey to insatiable appetites. His Italian campaign turned out to be a pretext on his part for sampling new women and adding the savor of violations to lustful exercise. The campaign could not have been easier, nor could it have provided greater enjoyments.

The huge army marched the length of the Peninsula without once unsheathing its arms; and finally, on reaching Naples, it gave itself over to uninterrupted debaucheries. Only on its way home did it have to stand a real battle, and that in order to fight its way out! Rightly did satirists of the time describe this adventure of Charles the Eighth, surnamed 'The Obstinate,' as the 'War of Fornication.' The King and his thirty thousand men did little else. Two female sovereigns, the Duchess Blanche of Savoy and the Marquise of Monferrat, opened the gates of the Peninsula to the youthful conqueror. The one received him splendidly at Turin, and the second at Casale—at both places, triumphal entries without fighting, then joustings and tourneys as the prelude to great banquets, dances at night with the ladies, and then slumber for each hero in beds warmed with eager hospitality! If the French monarch and his paladins crossed the Alps with the idea of making female conquests, the beautiful ladies of Italy were equally ready to be conquered. The documents of the time, both private and official, stress the incredible revelries that featured the march all along its course. Charles repaid the hospitality of the Duchess and the Marchioness by borrowing their jewels with utmost frankness, and pawning them to pay the wages of his troops. Then the orgy moved on into the territory of Milan.

"The young wife of Gian Galeazzo threw herself at the King's feet, protesting that Ludovico the Moor, a usurper, was holding her husband, the King's nephew, prisoner, in order to retain control of the government. Charles the Eighth wept tears of sorrow at the rehearsal of such a just complaint. Ludovico, however, had opened the Peninsula to the French, just as he was now opening Milan. The King dried his tears and marched on. Shortly afterward Galeazzo was poisoned by his uncle, that the widow might have no further cause for lament.

"The invading army advanced from Milan to Florence, welcomed in all the towns as it had been in Turin: *fiestas,* tourneys, banquets, women, and, on departure, loans of money. Cesare Borgia left Rome, shut himself up in Orvieto, a city entrusted to

him by his father, and took measures for its defence. This son of a Spaniard, born in Rome, was beginning to evince an Italian pride, of which most of his countrymen seemed entirely destitute. While everyone was yielding to the invader, and the women of the Italian aristocracy were adding shame to the general cowardice, he, Cesare Borgia, was the only one to make armed protest! Orvieto closed its gates, the only town to do so along all the road to Naples. The French wave beat unsuccessfully against the citadel and finally rolled on.

"While Charles the Eighth was advancing from Florence toward Rome, two great misfortunes came upon the Pope, who was now left quite alone.

"Bocciardo, his secret agent to the Turks, landed near Ancona on the Adriatic with a Turkish envoy, carrying the forty thousand ducats advanced for Djem's support. Both emissaries fell into the hands of a band captained by Giovanni della Rovere, the Cardinal's brother, who had been expelled from the Castle at Ostia. He took the forty thousand ducats and let the Sultan's Ambassador go. Bocciardo, however, he kept a prisoner and sent him with all the papers captured on his person to Cardinal Giuliano, who was travelling in the retinue of the French king. Djem's pension went to defray the expenses of the French campaign, and Cardinal Giuliano kept the documents, altered them in the proper sense, and then published them in order to discredit his adversary. His forgeries carried a slander worthy of his violent character. He pretended that Bajazet had asked the Pope to murder Djem and was offering three hundred thousand ducats in exchange for his brother's corpse.

"That lie was too crude," said Claudio, "and never produced the effect Giuliano desired. Bajazet, for his part, might have been capable of making such a proposal. During Borgia's pontificate, and the preceding, he had tried a number of times to have his brother killed now by Turkish agents, now by hired Italian assassins. But it was to the Pope's interest to keep Djem safe and sound. To have the Turkish Pretender at his disposal was an instrument for keeping the Turk in hand and collecting an-

nually a pension of forty thousand ducats. To have murdered him would have been to kill the goose of the golden eggs, for the cost of Djem's maintenance was not a tenth of the amount received."

"No one paid attention to Giuliano's charge at the time," Enciso added, "there is no doubt of that! But a century later, Protestant historians took up the forgotten slander and accused Pope Borgia of killing Djem. As a matter of fact, the Turkish Pretender did die some months later, but as a result of alcoholic excesses, which he carried beyond all bounds while in the hands of Charles the Eighth.

"When the King reached Lucca he met Cardinal Piccolomini, nephew to Pius the Second, a kindly, compromising sort of man who had been selected by the Pope to make terms, if possible, with the invaders. But everybody knew the desperate plight Alexander was in. He had no means of resistance. All his friends had deserted him. His very life was in danger. The Roman barons, now in revolt, were waiting only for a favorable occasion to seize the Pope's capital and perhaps put him to death. The King, therefore, refused to talk with Piccolomini, asserting that he needed no go-betweens in dealing with the Pope. He would discuss matters with Alexander personally, during the festivities of Christmastide, by which time he thought he would be in Rome."

The other disappointment was of a more personal character. In the month of November *la bella Giulia* took it into her head to leave the shelter of Lucretia's castle at Pesaro for a trip to Viterbo, where her brother, the Cardinal, was living at the moment. With her went a sister-in-law, and doña Adriana de Milá. A company of French horsemen commanded by Ives d'Allègre (later to be Cesare Borgia's companion-in-arms), came upon the cortège of the three ladies and took them prisoner, demanding, as was the custom, a ransom for their release. In those days the distinctions between warfare and banditry were not very clearly drawn.

Though the French commander spoke enthusiastically of Julia's

beauty to the King, Charles refused to see her—a decision hard to understand in a man who had evinced the curiosity of an insatiable connoisseur in everything pertaining to Italian complexions. Perhaps Cardinal della Rovere and other Italians in the King's suite prevented his meeting the fair booty in fear lest her pleadings swing the French monarch to Alexander's side.

The Pope, at any rate, showed all the anxieties of a doting lover on learning of what had happened, and began immediate and varied negotiations to effect the liberation of the captives. He despatched the three thousand ducats demanded by the French captain, and sent two Cardinals to King Charles to protest the capture as unchivalrous and procure the King's order for a release. The three ladies were straightway forwarded to Rome under heavy escort, and Juan Marrades, the Pope's Chamberlain and private secretary, rode forth to meet them beyond the city walls. This "Babylonian captivity" had lasted just four days and provoked immense amusement throughout Italy as an episode worthy of the "War of Fornication."

Ludovico the Moor, in Milan, filed his protest too, but at the absurd amount of the ransom with which the French Captain had rested content.

"Three thousand ducats?" he cried. "You were crazy! His Holiness would have given ten times as much, for all I know, a hundred times as much, to regain possession of his beautiful concubine."

Meantime the French army was advancing on Rome from the North; while from the South came the army of the King of Naples. The Pope could have little confidence in the latter, since its commander, the Duke of Calabria, was advising him to abandon his capital and take refuge at Naples. Alexander did not know what to do. His temper unruffled, his confidence unshaken, he seemed to be looking for some favorable turn in events though he could not imagine whence it might come—the King and Queen of Spain had involved him in his present predicament, but were still aiding him only with comforting words. At one moment he made up his mind to flee in order not to

fall into the hands of Charles the Eighth, who would surely force recognition of his claims to the throne of Naples. But it was too late! French scouts were already galloping about the *campagna,* and from the very windows of the Vatican the Pope could see them on the heights of *Monte Mario.* The Castle at Sant' Angelo had been much neglected by preceding Popes and was in no condition to offer serious resistance.

"A real Calvary of a month's duration was in store for the Pope," said Enciso; "but such a bitter trial was only to demonstrate that greatness in character and diplomacy which was to bring him victorious through so many dangers."

He consented to the French King's entrance into Rome, but on condition that the invading troops keep to the left bank of the Tiber. By late December a few detachments of the French army were already lodged in Rome, outside the Leonine City, where they were guilty of the same outrages which they had perpetrated in other Italian towns, especially outrages against women. Meantime the French monarch was consulting his astrologers in order to select the most favorable day for his entry into the Eternal City. The Festival of Saint Sylvester was finally designated, and Charles marched into Rome on the 31st of December, the enemies of the Borgias taking it for granted that Alexander's tiara was as good as gone. Indeed, Cardinal della Rovere and other prelates in the royal escort began making plans for the Conclave that would depose Alexander the Sixth and name his successor.

The Pope listened patiently to the arrogant envoys of the monarch. They were not modest in their demands. They would have the immediate delivery of Prince Djem, and the transfer of the Castle of Sant' Angelo to a French garrison. The Pontiff should give Charles immediate investiture as King of Naples and legitimatize the descent of that throne within his family. Cesare Borgia must surrender to the French and accompany them as a hostage till Naples should be conquered.

In the face of such terms, formulated in rude and peremptory language, it would have seemed that Alexander had only two

alternatives: either to accept, in humiliating resignation; or break off negotiations with an abrupt refusal. The crafty Pontiff did neither of these things. He began arguing the issues one by one, putting off decisions as long as possible. When confronted with an ultimatum to say "Yes" or "No," he would suffer a fainting spell, and the matter would have to go over till the following day.

When the French besiegers withdrew from before Orvieto, Cesare Borgia set forth from that refuge and, by one of those surprising rides which he was to use later in his campaigns, managed to reach his father's side. At his suggestion the Pope took the one energetic measure possible in the circumstances. On the 7th of January, Alexander and his Cardinals secretly made their way to the Castle of Sant' Angelo through the underground passage that led from the Vatican, and posted themselves in that fortress in demeanor of desperate defence. The Pope's prestige was still so great that the King dared neither attack him nor depose him, as Rovere, Sforza, and other enemies of the Borgias, advised. He was afraid of the shock such a violent act might cause at home in France and in other countries. Alexander, on his side, perceived that the Castle would hardly be able to resist an assault conducted in earnest.

As a result, both parties stood ready for compromise. Negotiations were resumed and brought to a conclusion a week later. The terms represented a virtual triumph for the Pontiff, whom everyone had considered lost a few days before. Prince Djem was handed over to the King of France for the duration of the expedition against the Turks; but meantime the Pope was to continue receiving the forty thousand ducats from the Sultan. Cesare Borgia would accompany the French King on his campaign for a period of four months, not however as a hostage, but as Papal Legate, with all the honors due to such a high office. A French garrison would occupy Civita-Vecchia while the King's army was crossing the Papal States, and Cardinal della Rovere would be readmitted to the citadel at Ostia. The Pope, for his part, would continue holding the Castle of Sant' Angelo,

receive public testimonial of obedience from the French King, be left free to govern his States without interference, and be guaranteed by the French monarch against attack. Not a word as to the Neapolitan succession, the point which Borgia was so eager to avoid! This omission, taken together with the King's oath of obedience, was a signal diplomatic victory for Alexander—a triumph of his spiritual authority!

He went back to his palace through the same secret passageway and now welcomed the King with great majesty, so impressing the youthful monarch, indeed, at their first meeting, and so charming him afterwards in private conversation, that Charles did not bring up the question of Naples but decided to defer the issue till another time. He needed to be off from Rome at the earliest possible moment! The French army had consumed all the provisions available in the city and its environs. Famine was threatening. The Roman populace could not endure the arrogance of the invaders. Riots and bloodshed were occurring daily. Groups of Spanish residents were in arms and attacking the insolent invaders at every street crossing. The Swiss halberdiers were special marks of popular fury. These burly mountaineers were great drinkers and pursued and violated women even in the public streets. The girls of the Roman populace were showing themselves much less conquerable than the ladies of a higher world.

The King left Rome, at the head of his troops, on the 28th of January, in the year 1495. At his right hand rode Cesare Borgia, the red cloak of a Cardinal thrown over his armor. He had accepted this appointment as Legate, which disguised his real status as a hostage, in apparent good humor; but people who knew him well suspected that some secret design underlay his ostentatious complaisance.

The young Cardinal's train was made up of twenty carts, their contents hidden under canvases marked with the shield of the Borgias. The first day's march ended at Marino. Just outside that village two of the carts broke their wheels, and had to be pushed to one side of the line of march. No one observed that

those particular carts held everything of real value belonging to the Legate.

The next day's march was longer, and the royal party reached Velletri. There the King, Prince Djem, and Cesare Borgia, were to occupy separate apartments prepared for them by the Bishop of the city. The Cardinal of Valencia attended the King to his quarters and then retired to his own. A French guard of honor accompanied him as representative of the Pontiff, though in reality its mission was to hold him in safe-keeping. Night fell.

As soon as it was dark Cesare left his lodgings by a back door and, disguised as a plain soldier and without attracting attention, walked in a leisurely manner through the streets till he came to a point on the *Via Appia* in the open country beyond the last houses of the city. There a man came forth from a clump of trees leading a magnificent warhorse by the bridle. It was a nobleman of Velletri, whom Cesare Borgia had made his friend during a residence at Marino the year before, in connection with a mission from his father. The Cardinal leaped into the saddle and galloped back at full speed toward Rome, entering the city before break of day. No one saw him, not even his father. Only long afterwards was it known that he went into hiding in the house of a humble Spanish priest, one Antonio Flores, a man who was at that time a clerk at the *Rota,* and who later became a Nuncio in France through favor of the Borgias.

Charles burst into a fury on learning of the Cardinal's flight, which he regarded as a personal insult; and his vexation was not much relieved when his men examined the eighteen carts, covered with Borgia canvases, which had not stirred from Velletri—the drivers were not aware of their chief's design. The carts contained nothing but stones and sacks of earth! A troop of French cavalry dashed back to seize the two which had broken down on the roadside; but those vehicles proved as hard to find as the Cardinal himself!

Cesare's stratagem, which had evidently been planned from the beginning, won him great applause in Rome, where people were ever ready to appreciate a joke. The City was still raging

at the abuses suffered from the invaders. The Borgias were now popular idols, and Cesare especially. This son of a Pope, born of a girl from across the Tiber, was showing himself a true Roman! Public imagination began attributing to him the most courageous exploits devised in a spirit of patriotic vengeance. It was reported that some drunken Swiss soldiers had forced their way into Vannozza's house and violated that still desirable matron; but that her son had sought out the authors of the outrage and put them to death with his own hands. The story was false—Vannozza was at the time in Pesaro, living in a safe refuge with her daughter, Lucretia; but the Roman mob was ready to credit anything heroic to "our Cæsar."

Alexander, for his part, was greatly alarmed at his son's rash step, which had been taken without consulting him. He despatched a delegation of Roman burghers full speed to Velletri, to apologize for the affront offered the French King and beg him not to wreak vengeance on the city. As the event proved, Charles was not in a position to exact reprisals. He had to hurry onward, in great chagrin at a jest which had deprived his expedition of a Papal Legate he required, if he were to give the impression that the Pope was supporting his cause. His embarrassment led the Cardinals hostile to the Borgias to believe that the whole intrigue had been planned between father and son; because it could not have been better timed to suit Alexander's policy. The King's cup of irritation was to overflow at Velletri the very next morning when some Spanish envoys appeared to deliver the protests of Ferdinand and Isabel against his march on Naples and his occupation of Papal fortresses. At last Alexander was beginning to receive some moral support from his friend, the Spanish King, though it was still a matter of words only.

However, the youthful conqueror marched forward, brushing the complaint contemptuously aside, to win a victory that could not have proved easier. The war was turning out to be a military parade. In view of the weakness of his troops and their scanty numbers, the King of Naples adopted the simple device

of abandoning his States and withdrawing to Sicily. Though not the least resistance was anywhere visible, the invading army sacked and burned a number of towns just across the Neapolitan frontier. This was enough to hasten the surrender of other places. In a few weeks Charles had possession of the whole Kingdom, virtually without drawing his sword.

He entered Naples in heroic triumph on the 22nd of February. The moment was now at hand for him to fulfill his promises of a Crusade and advance on Constantinople by way of Greece—the latter country was eagerly awaiting him to rise against the Turks. But three days after the King's entrance, Prince Djem died. The enemies of the Pope, doing violence to all plausibilities, attributed his death to the Borgias, alleging that he had been handed over to the King of France already poisoned, as though such a thing were possible. In point of fact the Sultan's brother had been ailing for sometime as a result of excesses at table. Mantegna, the painter, had frequent occasion to visit him in his lodgings at the Vatican. He declares that Djem ordinarily ate five copious meals a day and was drunk at all hours. A fair horseman while in the saddle, he was a grotesque figure on foot as a consequence of his extreme fatness and the ugliness of his features. Cesare and Giovanni Borgia found this curious Turk an amusing fellow and came to like him. More than once the two sons of the Pope appeared in the streets of Rome in turban and kaftan, and with their horses bridled in Turkish style, imitating the interesting fashions of the captive prince.

"Alexander the Sixth," Enciso continued, "could have had no possible motive for murdering Djem. As long as the Turkish pretender lived, the Pope would continue drawing the pension of forty thousand ducats from the Sultan. On the other hand, if Djem remained in the hands of Charles the Eighth, the latter stood pledged to utilize the captive's influence by an immediate march on Constantinople. The King, however, had never thought seriously of such a Crusade, and he, accordingly, would have been the only one to gain by the death of the Turkish

prince. If poisoning there were, the suspicions would better rest on Charles. As a matter of fact, Djem ate and drank himself to death, his debauches increasing after he left the Vatican, since he was then with an army where everyone was drunk, or else sunk in more bestial license."

The French King's residence in Naples was, in fact, a fitting climax to the "War of Fornication." The city was given over to one great orgy. Neither the King nor his captains gave a thought to their promise of making war on the Infidel. The ranks of the army thinned out with alarming speed under the ravages of drunkenness and disease. The conquerors abused the Neapolitans as they had abused the inhabitants of other cities, robbing them individually and exacting heavy contributions.

The celebrated Commines, who was serving as French Ambassador in Venice, took alarm at the turn in Italian public opinion, and wrote his King advising an immediate retreat. In fact, Ferdinand the Catholic, working from Spain, was busily weaving a great intrigue against Charles the Eighth, combining the Pope, the Emperor of Austria, Venice, and even Ludovico the Moor, who had opened the gates of Italy to the French army but was now changing his mind in view of French excesses. The new League was proclaimed on the 12th of April and Charles had to dash at once for the French frontier, to avoid being cut off by the Allies in the Kingdom of Naples. Escape by sea was impossible. Fleets of Spain and Venice held the Mediterranean as well as the Adriatic. He had to go out by the same door through which he had entered; and to reach the Alps he would again be obliged to cross the Papal States.

Charles left part of his army in Naples under command of the Duke of Montpensier and with the remainder set out for Rome, informing the Pope of his visit in most flattering terms. But Alexander was a sly old fox not to be caught in such a trap as this pleasure-loving youngster could lay. He suspected that the King's real intention was again to lay hands on Cesare Borgia and use the boy as a shield, as he made his way back to France across hostile Italy. The French monarch could be relied on to

seek revenge upon a still younger man who had made him look ridiculous through the stratagem of Velletri!

To induce the Pope to grant him an audience in Rome, the King offered an immediate payment of a hundred thousand ducats, and for the investiture of Naples he suggested an annual tribute of fifty thousand ducats. Since soldiers in his pay were still occupying the Kingdom, he considered the permanence of his conquest as beyond dispute, never dreaming that Ferdinand the Catholic would send an army from Spain to drive him out. But neither the King's bribes nor the threats of the French envoys moved the Pope. He decided rather to imitate Cesare's tactics; and fled with twenty Cardinals from Rome to take refuge in Orvieto.

Charles barely halted in the capital, but hurried toward Orvieto, in quest of the audience. Alexander, however, was determined to avoid an interview at all costs. He moved on to Perugia, to give the troops of the League time to mobilize at Parma. Informed of what was going on, Charles gave up hope of the audience, and dashed in precipitous flight along the road to the Alps; whereupon Alexander returned tranquilly to Rome with Cesare riding at his side. The young man had long since left his hiding-place in the house of Antonio Flores and was at his father's elbow during all these skilful marches and countermarches.

Charles was in fact cut off, and had to fight a furious battle at Fornovo to break the armed circle his enemies had drawn about him. In the presence of real danger at last, the young King deported himself like a valiant knight and fought the one fight worthy of mention in the whole war. He finally managed to save his person, though the baggage of his army, as well as the booty he had won at Naples, remained in the enemy's hands. Even the King's personal belongings were abandoned on the field of battle—in particular, a collection of portraits which he was taking home as souvenirs of the beauties he had possessed in Italy.

"This war of a single battle," Enciso concluded with a sinister

expression, "by reason of the terrible licentiousness which featured its every detail, first brought to prominent notice a great affliction which still torments the human race. A living spectre of syphilis seemed suddenly to raise its head in Italy and to terrify everyone with the hideous spectacle of its ugliness. The disease must have existed in Europe at an earlier period, though probably with somewhat different manifestations. For some reason that has never been understood, it seems to have gained sudden virulence at this time, and to have spread with explosive rapidity among all social classes, destroying kings and Popes, and desolating whole regions. It may well have been that the measures used by medicine at the time in combating the disease contributed rather to its violence and contagiousness."

"Strangely enough," answered Borja, "the disease seems to have broken out among the Spanish Discoverers in America at almost the same time, and a parallel legend came to attribute its origin to the poor natives of the New World."

"Yes," answered Enciso, "and I suppose there is no way of arriving at the truth. The fact that Europeans associated syphilis with the march of Charles the Eighth enabled writers to foist its origin upon one people or another according as they happened to live on one side or the other of the Alps. The Italians came to call it the 'French disease,' or in more learned style the 'Gallic disease.' The French knew it as the 'Neapolitan disease.' "

CHAPTER VI

A Faux Pas

THIS placid, smooth-running life in an atmosphere of historical memory was to be disturbed for Claudio Borja, some days later, by two separate considerations. After one of those "confidential luncheons" to which the Ambassador from Spain frequently invited him, that gentleman beckoned him aside into his private office, and began to "talk down" to him, in tone of affection, just as he had done in the old days as his guardian. A few allusions to his friendship with Claudio's father! . . . And besides, Borja had always been regarded as a member of the family! . . . Oh, to be sure, he, Claudio, was a few years older than Stella, but they had, you might say, been brought up together. . . . Not to mention the "elective affinity"—so he called it, which they had always had for each other. . . .

"Why," said Bustamante, "back there in Madrid everybody took it for granted that you two were going to marry, and then . . . afterwards . . . things changed! Well, let's not talk of that! I am a man myself, and have had my weaknesses—things I would just as soon forget! But I have been watching you two recently, and I am sure I am not mistaken . . . you two . . . well you have patched it up, that's all. . . . Oh, don't deny it! It's something anyone can see! Stella seems happier than she has been for a long time; and my sister-in-law tells me that when the three of you are out together, Stella and you try to walk ahead of her, by yourselves . . . a thing not altogether considerate of poor Natí, though it does give her a real joy, I can tell you! . . ."

The pompous Ambassador thought the situation was getting hard to explain! That was why he had decided to take a hand in such an affair of the heart! When, in two words—when were Claudio and Stella going to be married?

Bustamante went on in the same tone of affectionate counsel. To look at the matter from Claudio's point of view, it was time for him to settle down, stop drifting aimlessly along into middle age as a confirmed bachelor! Amusement was all right so far as it went; but a fellow owed something to the society in which he lived; and payment of such a debt brought both profit and honor! Claudio would work better with a young and charming wife to look after him; and—Bustamante ventured the hint in appropriately modest terms—not everyone had the chance to be the son-in-law of a Senator and an Ambassador! That connection would assure Borgia any post he wished in public life in Spain . . . or, if he preferred to live abroad, in Rome, for example, the best society would be open to him, thanks to the intimacies which don Aristides had contracted among the people he encountered. To be sure, Borja was already accepted in that world through his personal merits as an attractive young man of estimable qualities; but he should not forget that not the least of those merits was his connection with the family of the Ambassador from Spain!

Claudio did not know what to do or say under this pressure from his sometime guardian. As a matter of fact, he had never discussed marriage with Stella. They had thought of each other all along as playmates, comrades, childhood friends. They talked of things usually as though their futures had something in common; but they had never gone so far as to define the precise character of that common destiny. They would laugh and joke, walk hand in hand, frolic about with the intimacy of children who had lived all their lives in the same family—but of love they had never talked! What a gulf, indeed, between his playful chats with Stella, and certain passionate hours he had passed in a beautiful garden on the Riviera! Not once had he kissed the girl, nor felt tempted to do so. He doubted whether he had ever really thought of her as a woman. He had found something sweet, something restful and soothing, in her companionship. That might have been love—but if it were, it was a love different from any he had otherwise known! As for doña Natí,

Claudio was a little vexed when he thought of her. Irritable, sour, bad-humored by nature, she must have used heroic violence upon herself to affect a counterfeit amiableness in his company! What right did she have always to be compromising him, taking it, as it were publicly, for granted that this delightful comradeship of two childhood friends was an engagement destined to culminate in matrimony?

But once recovered from his well-controlled irritation at the widow Gamboa, Borja was free enough in his mind to consider the implied suggestions of don Aristides with the respect he had always felt for the notions of his guardian. Why, in fact, not marry? Some day, probably, he would feel obliged to do what everybody else did! In that case, Stella would make as good a wife as any woman he would be likely to encounter. The incidental advantages of this particular match did not excite him at all. He cared not a whit about Bustamante's influence! The important point was Stella's sweet and gentle personality, or, rather, her lack of any personality. That would surely make her less troublesome as a wife than most women—completely submissive and adaptable to her husband's tastes and fancies! A man in whom imagination was stronger than will, who indeed derived all his volition from the last idea that came to him, Claudio could foresee marriage with Stella as promise of a peaceful, monotonous, colorless existence, a life reminding one of those misty days of soft, murky sunlight, when people and things seemed fused in a sort of viscous fluidness and every movement is bland, silent, elastic. An artist, moreover, indifferent to morals, regarding morals as somehow incompatible with art and love, he nevertheless admired the pure and ingenuous innocence of this young girl, qualities which normally he would have called the "natural endowments of a brainless woman." In his feeling, perhaps, there was something of the homesickness which the ultra-sophisticated feel at times for the simple and the naïve. Claudio went so far as to imagine that a girl like Stella might have a wholesome influence on his future, freeing him from those inner struggles, those distracting contradictions, which

had embittered his youth. Here was an Elizabeth about to transform her knight Tannhäuser into a "balanced, respectable citizen"—epithets which don Aristides unfailingly used in characterizations of South American celebrities whom he added to his list of "friends."

The upshot of this play of pressures was that Claudio had no particular objection to the Ambassador's proposal. Indeed, the Senator left the interview with the impression that Borja was ready to marry Stella and that the family should proceed with the necessary arrangements.

From that time on, Claudio and Stella thought of themselves as engaged, though neither of them had said a definite word on the subject. The Senator and doña Natí began considering a date for the wedding and whispered news of the betrothal among all habitual callers at the Embassy. Claudio was conscious of a favorable change in the atmosphere about him. Social life in Rome consisted of parties, dinners, teas, which bring virtually the same people together day after day. Since two powers existed in Rome side by side, the Papacy and the Kingdom of Italy, there were more embassies and legations in Rome than in any other capital in the world. The two corps that represented a given country at the Vatican and on the Quirinal were inclined furthermore to view each other with envy and to compete in more or less friendly rivalry. The result was that not a day went by without some important reception attended by the two armies of diplomats which occupied Rome and attracting the Papal and the secular aristocracies, in addition to distinguished foreigners who chanced to be present in the city.

Following Stella on these rounds, Claudio was soon caught in the wheels of that mechanism of vapid display. Every night he would find himself at a dinner or a ball in one of the embassies, surrounded by dignified but empty individuals, respectful of precedent to the point of superstition, and all the more ready, therefore, to treat him with new deference on learning that he was to become a son-in-law to His Excellency the Ambassador from Spain. Rare the evening when he did not dress. The villa

which he had rented he now used only as a place to sleep in. He lunched almost every day with the Bustamantes at the Embassy in the *Piazza di Spagna*—meals at which the Ambassador would sit in smiling silence, looking vacantly about the table, as though his mind were fixed on grave problems of public policy. Claudio and Stella would make the conversation, exchanging the gossip current in diplomatic Rome, which at bottom bored them both. If animation there were, it came from the spiteful doña Natí, who was ever ready to vent her spleen on the Government of His Catholic Majesty, which seemed to think it could have decent Ambassadors while still paying them like beggars! On such points the widow was well informed. She could quote the figures in *francs* and *lire, pesetas* and pounds, showing always that Bustamante was paid nothing as compared with representatives of other powers. That was why rival diplomats could give the great entertainments they gave; while it was her task as the Senator's housekeeper to make ends meet by spacing her teas at the widest possible intervals, and devising ways and means to reduce costs without reducing brilliancy. And she would always conclude:

"We came here to represent the country, not to put ourselves in the poor-house."

Enciso de las Casas encountered Borja frequently at these *fiestas* of diplomacy, and would usually engage him in conversations aside, to re-emphasize the burden of his official duties.

"If I were free to follow my own inclinations, my dear Borja," he would say, "I would keep to my library studying and writing. You know, I am much more of a writer than I am of a diplomat. But I make the sacrifice! Plain sense of duty to my country, you see! If I should resign, my home government would never spend money enough to have a creditable representative at the Papal Court!"

But though, with an intellectual's superiority, he affected to despise this unending round of frivolity, he never missed a reception, even when he was ill enough to be in bed; and not a week passed without at least one formal banquet in the museum-palace which he had bought. Whenever he alluded to Borja's future

connections with the Bustamante family, Enciso would smile with the smile which Claudio had observed on the lips of the Senator himself:

"That's right!" it would seem to say. "The time for wild oats is past! You ought to get married and settle down, as all people like us do in the end! . . ."

But this tacit counsel of wisdom was always tempered with a certain rancorless envy on Enciso's part, such envy as a child might feel toward enjoyments reserved for grown-ups. The man could never forget Claudio's good fortune with Rosaura de Pineda, who epitomized in Enciso's eyes all the wild temptations of life.

One night at the French Embassy Enciso approached Claudio with the words:

"Do you know who is in Rome? Señora de Pineda! I haven't seen her myself. I got the news from a young man, who is secretary at one of the South American legations. He is seeing a good deal of her. He says she may be here this evening!"

And he turned and began looking about the hall as though expecting his eye to fall on the beautiful lady from the Argentine at any moment.

Claudio received the news with apparent indifference—Enciso could not have guessed the real effect of his words. And it may not have been more than a start of surprise; for after the first moment, Claudio seemed to take no interest in the imminent arrival of the goddess he had loved.

But Rosaura did not come after all. As Enciso was bidding good-night with his wife and daughters, he left them for a moment and again approached Claudio:

"Something must have kept her at home," he said, without mentioning Rosaura's name—who else could have been of interest to them both? "But I shall call on her tomorrow morning at her hotel. You will be meeting her at our house. We are thinking of giving a little dinner one of these days, just for close friends of the family—to celebrate a decoration I have received (without in any way deserving it)!"

It was in this tone that the amateur and unsalaried diplomat always spoke of little dinners, little parties, little celebrations, in honor of decorations undeserved. As he saw things, modesty was the one convincing sign of greatness. Actually, the chief occupation of his life was the pursuit of decorations, honorary chairmanships, and elections to academies; and his "little" dinners were served by a dozen domestics, either his own or hired for the occasion; and those poor Italians were forced to stuff themselves into yellow coats, black knee breeches and white wigs, even though they were to suffocate in heat and sweat! This South American millionaire with the soul of a Renaissance Cardinal, in which devotion and piety were mixed with sinfulness—be it only sinfulness of thought, considered a handsomely liveried service indispensable in any ancient palace furnished and over-furnished in the spirit of the antique!

A few days later Borja received the promised invitation, a formally printed card to which Enciso had added a personal touch through a line in handwriting. The dinner was to toast a Grand Papal Cross, the only one still lacking in the brilliant collection which had gradually come to occupy the whole left front of Enciso's coat.

Claudio attended the function with the Bustamantes. Enciso's grand stairway, a pompous concoction of the Eighteenth century, with marble balustrades and busts of goddesses and ancient heroes, was lined with a double file of footmen in gold colored costumes and white wigs. The host was waiting to receive them at the door of the great hall. Though the banquet had been styled "informal" and the dignitaries in attendance came in plain evening dress without the decorations used at official assemblies, a colored ribbon diagonally bisected Enciso's shirt-front and a plaque of brilliants set around the miniature of a Saint illumined the area over his heart. He himself could not avoid wearing the insignia of the new distinction the Vatican had let fall upon him! He had to show some appreciation for the benefit of His Eminence, who was to figure among the guests. The Eminence in question was one of the many Cardinals whom

Enciso regarded as his friends, now adoring and courting them since he could not do without them, now repelling them with fits of indifference, according to the fluctuations of impulsive affinities for members of the Sacred College, which he conceived or forgot with the capriciousness of a temperamental coquette. At the moment his great man was a Cardinal who figured in all matters of foreign policy at the Vatican, and who had lived a long time abroad in many countries as a Papal Nuncio.

"Oh, he is our next Pope!" Enciso would say, mysteriously. "People whom I know and trust are quite explicit on that point! The tiara will some day be his!"

However, friends of Enciso remembered that he had made the same prophecy successively of all the Cardinals who had momentarily engaged his favor. For a prelate to appear among Enciso's intimates was for him to acquire the certain destiny of some day mounting the Papal throne.

Since, through fault of doña Natí, the Spanish Ambassador and his company were a little late, the greeting from the host in the grand vestibule, of high ceilings, gilded furniture and chairs of red brocade, had to be very brief. For that matter, everyone knew everybody else. The thirty guests, this time, all belonged to the Papal diplomatic corps or to the "Black" aristocracy of Rome which served the Vatican as a matter of tradition. The presence of a Prince of the Church prevented the appearance of diplomats accredited to the Quirinal, and of numbers of ultra-worldly persons whom Enciso ordinarily enjoyed having about him. Borja was unknown only to His Eminence, and the master of the house hastened to present him to this tall, pale prelate with prominent cheek-bones, a high forehead, and cavernous eyes that looked about with an expression now grave, now whimsically sagacious. The Cardinal received him as though he had known him all his life. And that was his manner with everyone! He lived among people as though no person or thing could ever surprise him, as though he knew the worst from the outset and could well imagine what he did not know.

Through arches so wide as to accommodate three couples at a

time, the guests began filing into the great dining-hall, designed two centuries before when space was no consideration at all. At the moment Enciso addressed a whispered explanation to Borja as though he thought some word of the kind was due:

"I invited her and she accepted, but then begged off at the last moment! I imagine she prefers not to see her old friends just now. She wants to be alone—or rather, alone with the lucky man who is her choice of the moment!"

Enciso's smile hurt Borja to the quick.

The guests took seats according to a distribution carefully worked out by the master of the house. Before each of his many banquets, Enciso would hold long and serious conferences with his secretary as to the status of each guest, that no one might find himself improperly graded as compared with any of the others. On this occasion His Eminence had to be regarded as guest of honor. Let alone his merits *ex officio,* he was the "influence" to whom Enciso owed his latest decorations. Only don Aristides, as ambassador of a Catholic power, could be regarded as the Cardinal's equal. To them accordingly were assigned the best places at the table. Borja found himself in the outer darkness, between a South American newspaperman, at the moment visiting in Rome, and a flabby-shouldered countess in a low-cut frock, who otherwise wore an ancient Roman name which Claudio had met many times in his readings on the history of the Borgias.

The cuisine itself was nothing remarkable in an establishment so ostentatious. Claudio, indeed, found something vulgar and commonplace about it, a suggestion of the atmosphere of a popular boarding-house. His attention absorbed in the decoration of his rooms and in the precedences of his guests, Enciso had no thought left for the menu. The Cardinal smiled at everyone, taking pains to find the right remark for each person, in accord with the latter's known tastes or country of origin. It was clear that for this ecclesiastical magnate, amiability was just a professional tool. He engaged Claudio's attention throughout the meal. He was certainly the most interesting figure in the company. Borgia could only admire the enigmatic smile that played

around the Churchman's lips, and the expression of feline ingratiation that came from his deep eyes. What could His Eminence be thinking of all those people who addressed him with such deference, and among whom Bustamante alone dared treat him on an equal footing by virtue of his post as Ambassador from Spain?

Borja talked but little, attending rather to the goblet of wine which he found before him and which a liveried servant refilled as fast as he emptied it. He seemed to be drowning in drink the dull formality of the conversation and the unappetizing plainness of the fare.

He came to himself along toward dessert, as a sudden silence that chanced to fall upon the company gave relief to the shrill voices of doña Natí, and some ladies from South America, who were engaged in vigorous argument at the lower end of the table. The name of Señora de Pineda was figuring in the talk—talk evidently to the discredit of the widow from the Argentine.

Enciso turned towards Bustamante's sister-in-law and her fellow gossips with a grimace of mild reproof, as though admonishing them to tolerance toward absent ones. Nevertheless in spite of the host's unexpressed remonstrance and indeed against his will, the spicy topic became general, as though everyone were eager to break the shackles of stiff formality and follow a lead so promising of mordant interest. In an instant, Italian had disappeared from the board! Everyone was talking Spanish, as soon, at least, as the others had caught up with the vehement South American ladies who had been the first to raise their voices. The Cardinal was the only one who showed no particular animation. He sat easily back in his chair, smiling enigmatically upon each in turn, never betraying his real thought.

Doña Natí and her colleagues in debate were telling all they knew about the pretty Argentinian who was now in Rome, deliberately raising their voices to express their spite or their holy horror. Had no one seen her? Of course no one had seen her! The Pineda woman was not calling on real people, and she was refusing invitations! Nevertheless, she could be seen

dancing every afternoon at the hotel where she was staying, dancing with a young Secretary-of-legation whose name did not need to be told! The ladies for the most part arched their eyebrows at this relationship. They all knew the young man, some depreciating him as insignificant, others expatiating on his defects. The tendency of the gossip was rather one of commiseration for Rosaura, who was, in so many other respects, so much to be admired. "Such a pretty woman, and she dresses so well—I can't understand what she sees in him!"

And soon the various episodes in the past of the pretty widow were flying about the table with dates and names, the name in particular of Urdaneta, the "doctor-general," whom all South Americans knew, a man now somewhat *passé* but who had well been counted, in his day, among the irresistibles. But as they finished with Urdaneta, a note of stammering and hesitation seemed to appear by fits and starts in the conversation. More than one pair of vicious female eyes swept the circle of guests, only to be lowered as they fell upon Claudio.

At this point the master of the house, always affable, always tolerant, felt called upon to pass from insinuation to positive words:

"Please, ladies, a little charity! Try to remember the lady in question is a friend of mine; that she was even to have been one of us tonight!"

But it was not easy to halt the flood of gossip, once the victim was a woman whom most of the ladies present openly hated and secretly envied. At a nod from the host, Señora de las Casas rose from the table and led the way into the great hall, for coffee and liqueurs. But it was evident even there that the circle of doña Natí and her friends held the topic of greatest interest to the company. Chairs were drawn up in her direction, or else people approached and stood silently about, in order to lose nothing of what was said. Those who did not know the Argentinian heiress had read or heard of her at various times. Others who professed her friendship could not resist the morbid pleasure of listening, without protest, to these amusing demolitions of

her character in words; or if they defended her, it was with a half-heartedness that only roused more venomous attacks. His Eminence had formed a company apart with his hosts, the Spanish Ambassador, and some Italian ladies who preferred to continue talking in their own language.

On noting that some of her companions could still find flattering things to say of Rosaura de Pineda, doña Natí began frankly to lose her temper. Her long-standing hatred of the woman burst forth in words of violent scorn:

"What I don't understand is how such a woman is ever received in houses of self-respecting people."

The *faux pas* caused a moment of painful silence in the company. It could only be interpreted as an allusion to the hosts of the evening. But doña Natí did not realize that. She rushed forward headlong in a fury of combative morality. Since her niece was the only unmarried lady present at the banquet and was standing at a safe distance in the group with the Cardinal, the spiteful widow could see no reason for tempering any one of her crude remarks.

"Lady? You call her a lady? Why is she any different from one of those others? Just because she doesn't make them pay? I say, who knows but what she pays herself? For surely you aren't going to tell me she's a beauty! You have to be blind to call that woman beautiful! You ought to look at her close too, as I have done any number of times! Paint this thick, upon my word! And her hair—her hair is dyed! What looks she has she gets in ways no decent person would use."

Doña Natí had not observed Claudio Borja's presence. When she talked of morality it was in a tone of authority, as though that were something which had been her private property and domain from the day of her birth. She could hardly believe her ears, indeed she looked around the company with an expression of bewilderment, as she found her philippics interrupted by a man's voice shaking with an anger and a disgust as great as hers:

"Morality? What is morality? There are all kinds of moralities! There is the morality of commonplace nobodies, the moral-

ity of jealous women, and the morality of gossiping tongues. And there is the morality of superior people, people who are above speaking ill of others who have never harmed them."

After a moment of aimless gazing about the company, doña Natí's eyes came to rest on Claudio Borja. He was the man who had been talking. To her still greater surprise, his face was pale. The lobules of his nostrils were taut and trembling. There was a combative gleam in his eyes. He was the picture of a man looking for a quarrel. Without a doubt he had been drinking too much.

Borja, also, realized dimly that he was not in a normal frame of mind, that, in fact, he was hot with wine. At the same time he told himself that even had he been entirely sober he would have said the same things. His hard voice carried to every corner of the room as silence fell about him. But instead of being abashed by the scandal he was causing he felt spurred to press on. He surveyed the women angrily as though they were men, but addressing himself directly to the housekeeper of his future father-in-law:

"What is the complaint of all you women against Señora de Pineda? The fact is, you are jealous of her because she is a bigger and better woman than any of you. She has chosen to live her life in her own way courageously, regardless of what commonplace people say, regardless of the fears and hesitations of ordinary people. She lives on a plane that few women are great enough to attain. Her morality is the morality of the goddesses of antiquity; that is why the gods made her more beautiful and more intelligent than other women. Those who find fault with her do not belong to her species. They remind me of so many frogs croaking in the mud of some pond in front of a priceless statue of Venus. What do such women know of beauty or of love? They think they have lived and loved when they have found a man to cook for and sleep with in exchange for a house to live in. They go about the world imagining they know it all! Whereas love is like genius, like wealth, like beauty, the privilege of the few! And those who were born to know love are, like

geniuses, exempt from the vulgar laws that are made to herd the vulgar mob. Why listen to such people? We others do not even understand their language, save that we know it is unworthy of us. At any rate, let them hold their tongues in the presence of superior people, whom they cannot understand."

He checked his flight of language at the interruption of two voices, one of them Senator Bustamante's, coming from behind him. The Ambassador in fact had laid a hand on his shoulder:

"What are you talking about? You surely do not mean that! Are you ill, Borja? What is the matter?"

In front of him the widow Gamboa was fanning herself frantically, her face flaming with anger, her two eyes blazing upon him as though to burn him to ashes. The woman could hardly articulate her words:

"Of course, she is a friend of yours, too good a friend of yours—and it was a scandal that shamed us all! And my brother-in-law is going to give his daughter to a man like that! But I have never approved. I do not approve! I will never approve!"

But a glance from don Aristides silenced her; and the approach of Enciso de las Casas, who had also heard all that Borja had said, put an end to the incident. As though by pre-arrangement, the guests divided into little groups and began talking in voices louder than normal of things of no interest to anyone.

As for Claudio, he found himself alone. Everyone pretended not to notice his presence. As he looked about the room, he could see only His Eminence gazing at him fixedly. There was no severity in the prelate's eyes. He had for the heretic the same kindly caressing feline smile he had for the others. Perhaps there was a more animate interest in it. Who could have said? This Prince of the Church may have regarded him as more worthy of attention than he had thought him at the beginning of the banquet, when Claudio had been introduced just as one among so many young men to be found in that pompous and fatuous world.

To be quite exact, Claudio's eyes did meet another pair of

eyes—Stella's eyes; and they were staring at him in astonishment and anguish, as though to ask him, "What in the world have you done? And why?"

Slowly he sipped two cups of coffee, standing erect near a little antique table with a marble top overladen with gold. Even the servants seemed to approach him timidly, in spite of his affectedly majestic pose, as though they feared to incur themselves some of the disapproval of that respectable throng. Inwardly, he was still trembling with the wrath that had spurred him to violate social conventions by stating his thought with insolent frankness. He resolved to challenge with his continued presence those who pretended to ignore him. Yes, he would be the last to go, just to show them he despised them all! But after a time the weight of the ostracism about him began to work its way under his skin. Feigning interest in the various pictures and statues that lined the walls, he made his way toward the door and at last darted through it in flight.

But just as a servant in livery was handing him his coat and hat in the ante-room, he felt a touch on his shoulder. Enciso had observed his withdrawal and had come out to bid him goodnight. The diplomat made a gesture of sadness as he pressed his hand—something like a farewell one might wave at a coffin being lowered into a grave. Enciso was really pained and shocked at what had happened. What would his friend, the future Pope, think of all that? But his outstretched hand was none the less hearty in its clasp, nor his glance less amiable. He understood perfectly! Claudio would still be his friend. Indeed, the young man's conduct was both just and logical! He had defended a woman whom he, Enciso, also judged adorable. Claudio had had all the more reason, for having been tied to Rosaura by his past. Excellent! Excellent! But what a pity it had to happen, just there, in his house!

He continued holding Borja's hand as he accompanied him to the lowest landing on the staircase and shook it again without saying a word. Borja imagined he guessed the man's thought. Enciso, the diplomat, could only condemn his scandalous frank-

ness. Enciso, the writer, found it admirable! Had not Stella's aunt stated the situation very well, when she said that that respectable citizen with a wife and family had an instinctive sympathy for all reprobates?

PART THREE

AUT CÆSAR, AUT NIHIL

AUT CÆSAR, AUT NIHIL

CHAPTER I

The "Girls of the Vatican"

CLAUDIO was greatly ashamed the day following as he thought of his conduct at Enciso's banquet; but his next feeling was one of angry self-assertion, in defence, as it were, against his own remorse:

"I gave them what they deserved! I will have nothing more to do with such stupid people! After all, what have I in common with them?"

And thus consoling himself for his estrangement from the artist-diplomat and his former guardian, he vowed he would leave Rome within the week. He could not escape much earlier; there would be so many things to attend to: the transfer of the villa, for instance, to some friend of its proprietor. And yet, poor Stella! That poor child was being hurt through no fault of her own! Stella deserved his pity! But why be bothered with a girl who deserved his pity? The lingering heat of the argument the night before brought him to bless his bad manners on that occasion as an act of Providence which would free him from a marriage he had never really wanted!

He did not leave the house all that forenoon in dread lest he meet someone who had witnessed the scene in Enciso's drawing-room. But then it seemed to him that such seclusion was an act of cowardice. What difference could it make to him if people he did not like greeted him or failed to see him? As he left his villa, his steps turned instinctively toward the Leonine City; and in front of the Basilica of St. Peter he joined a group of tourists who were just entering the Vatican to visit the "Rooms of the

Borgias," the *Aedes Borgiæ,* as they had been called by the Latinists of the Renaissance.

He often made this pilgrimage to admire the seven rooms originally inhabited by Pope Alexander the Sixth. The arch-vaults and the upper two-thirds of the walls had been painted by Pinturicchio, the lower third remaining unadorned, to be covered with tapestries. Claudio had nothing but approval for the scheme of decoration arranged by thist artist-Pope, patron of sculptors and painters whom Julius the Second and Leo the Tenth carried over into their service, after Alexander's death, in order to usurp a share of their predecessor's glory. Julius the Second (Giuliano della Rovere), especially, had devoted the early years of his pontificate to obliterating or slandering the memory of his sometime rival. It was he who closed the "Rooms of the Borgias" and started a sacrilegious legend, which grew and grew as three centuries went by. Since no one could see the "Rooms," people talked of them as places of abomination, decorated with indecent pictures by Pinturicchio. In one of the frescoes the Virgin was said to be portrayed with the features of Julia Farnese and with Pope Alexander kneeling at her feet. All the Borgias likewise were supposed to appear in one guise or another in the paintings. It was not until the end of the Nineteenth century that Pope Leo the Thirteenth, a diplomat-Pontiff, who greatly admired the work of Alexander the Sixth, put an end to the scandalous legend by repairing the "Rooms" and opening them to the public. The age-old structure of falsehood collapsed of its own weight. Alexander could indeed be seen on his knees in one of the pictures, but before a figure of the Christ, risen from the tomb. *La bella Giulia* was nowhere to be found. It was only at a later date—after her Pontiff's death—that a statue of her in the nude was set up in open Church at Saint Peter's. It was by no means certain that Lucretia Borgia was the Saint Catherine of another fresco, nor Cesare, the tyrant who was condemning her to martyrdom. Pinturicchio executed the picture of Saint Catherine at a time when the children of the Pope were still small!

The only thing in any of the "Rooms" to commemorate the Borgia family was the red bull of their coat-of-arms which appeared frequently as an ornamental motive. The interest which the people of those days took in ancient history had, however, left its traces in this connection. One of the paintings represented the apotheosis of Apis the Ox, by virtue, doubtless, of the association of that Egyptian deity with the sturdy beast that capered over the escutcheon of the Valencian house.

Claudio found the so-called "*Logge* of Raphael" on the floor above. In the days of Alexander the Sixth they were used as apartments for Cesare Borgia, his son. In them the young man must have given some of his licentious banquets.

Issuing again from the Vatican, Claudio turned into the street, so-called, of the *Borgo Nuovo*. A narrow thoroughfare moderns would regard it, though when it was first opened, it was celebrated in verse and festival for its breadth and straightness, opening up as it did an area of tortuous alleys and tumble-down buildings. The *Via del Borgo Nuovo,* dedicated during the Jubilee of the year 1500, was originally called the *Via Alessandrina,* in honor of Pope Borgia, who designed it in order to bring air and light to the Old City about the Vatican. Borja remembered that among the visitors who attended that Jubilee was a man from the North, named Nicholas Copernicus. The modern study of astronomy also was to begin under the reign of the same Pontiff who had witnessed the discovery of the New World!

Wandering aimlessly about, Claudio eventually found himself at home again and passed the afternoon and most of the night in the studio, which was the most agreeable room in the villa. His morning's visit to the Vatican had turned his mind to the manuscripts and articles which his uncle had given him at Nice; and soon he found himself plunging once more into his study of the later adventures of the Borgias.

On the retreat of the King of France, Alexander stood triumphant, but not the more secure on that account. The King of Naples had abdicated in favor of his son, the young don Ferrante; but since the new sovereign was unable to reconquer

his realm from the ten thousand French troops, whom Charles had left as a garrison, Gonzalo de Cordova, thereafter known as the Great Captain, was sent on from Spain by sea, and with the inadequate resources at his disposal began gradually to reduce the French. But Alexander, meantime, was starting a war of his own. He felt minded to chastise those vassals of the Church who, instead of coming to her defense, had joined Charles the Eighth, subjecting the Pope to great humiliation and actually endangering his life. During the campaign just past Cesare Borgia had been thoughtfully observing the treachery of the Roman barons and making his plans for the future. The Pope, for his part, following the well-known tradition of his family, saw in his quarrels with the Orsinis and other traitors an opportunity to do something for his eldest child, the second Duke of Gandia. That young man at the moment was living a life of princely luxury in Valencia, as husband to the niece of Ferdinand the Catholic.

Turning one by one the leaves of his uncle's documents, Claudio came upon transcripts of letters which the Pontiff had addressed to this son, an attractive and valiant youth, though inferior in intelligence both to Cesare and Lucretia Borgia. The letters were full of counsel as to the young man's manner of living. He was urged by his father, the Pope, not to spend too much money; to show himself unfailingly affable, and kindly toward the poor and the lowly; to be considerate of the Duchess, his wife; to remember that peace in the home was more important in the end for a Christian gentleman than the fleeting pleasures of amorous adventure; to remain faithful in his devotion to the Virgin—and one letter closed with admonishments touching upon certain unseemly conduct into which the Pope had heard his son was falling.

"Quite a different sort of Borgia," thought Claudio, "from the Pope of the legends, which make parents and children of that family indulge in the most scandalous acts in each other's presence. If those stories were true, could Rodrigo Borgia have written such letters, urging a moral Christian life upon a child

who had been his boon companion in his orgies? No, the man who wrote them was a father like other fathers, guilty perhaps of his own indiscretions outside the home, but, within the home, strictly observant of the proprieties, and exigent as to family discipline. Nor was there any hypocrisy in his devotion to the Virgin. Great sinner that he was, he worshipped Her in good faith; and such mingling of piety and licentiousness was not at all uncommon in the magnates of those days, who ingenuously united Christianity and Paganism. Such complexities are difficult for us moderns to understand; but that is no reason for denying their existence. The moment one doubts a future life with its rewards and punishments, to sin is not a particularly courageous thing. Some of the successors of Alexander, among them Leo the Tenth, were suspected of atheism. Rodrigo Borgia, on the other hand, believed in God and in the Virgin; he was certain of his eternal damnation; and yet he could not resist his ardent passions. 'Vanquished by carnality' as one of his contemporaries said, he was a Catholic and a libertine, a Spaniard from the land of Don Juan. To be sure, sincere repentance might save his soul at the eleventh hour!"

Claudio remembered that at Valencia he had seen a wooden plaque, painted in the Fifteenth century, with portraits of all the children of Alexander the Sixth. It may have been a present from the Pope himself, who frequently sent gifts of the kind to churches and convents in his native land. In the painting in question the Duke of Gandia appears in profile, a young man, crowned with a chaplet of roses like a poet, with a pointed blonde beard, quiet, regular features, and a soft, half-whimsical expression in the one almond-shaped eye that is visible.

On receiving the family summons, the young man set sail from Valencia, overcoming the secret opposition of Ferdinand the Catholic, who would have preferred to keep him within reach, in Spain, as a means of controlling the Pope. On taking leave of his wife and his two children—one of whom was to be parent of the future Saint Francis Borgia—and going on board his galley decorated with its waving flags and pennants, the

Prince could never have dreamed that his ultimate destination was death, that that was to be a last farewell, that he would never see his little ones again.

For once all the Borgias found themselves assembled in Rome. Lucretia had deserted her husband and returned to her father's court, complaining that Giovanni Sforza was "not serving her" as a husband should. For that matter, in the course of the political whirlwind through which Alexander had just passed, his son-in-law had deported himself suspiciously and had evidently been in secret collusion with the Pope's enemies.

The first to arrive was Geoffrey, now Prince of Squillace, with his disquieting bride, doña Sancha of Aragon. During the French invasion this couple had run to hiding in Calabria, whence they had been rescued by the recent victories of Gonzalo de Cordova. Alexander prepared a great reception for the Prince and the Princess, now two years wed. The Cardinals and the guilds of Rome rode out beyond the gates to greet them and escort them into the presence of the Pontiff, who was awaiting them surrounded by his Court and all the Ambassadors. Sancha became fast friends with her sister-in-law, Lucretia. The latter was no paragon of virtue—hardly any Italian gentlewoman of that time could claim as much; but Lucretia's placid, unexcitable disposition kept her safe from evil conduct, whereas Sancha, a woman of insatiable passions, set no limits to satisfactions of them and brazenly flaunted her scandals both in word and in deed. Thus three young women, the oldest of them barely twenty and the other two much younger, came together at the Papal Court: Julia Farnese, Lucretia Borgia and Sancha of Aragon.

Claudio could see them in his imagination's eye, gowned in wondrous splendor, conscious of their influence over the males about them, self-assured in the possession of the highest of all patronages, and taking everything lightly and in laughter, with all the irresponsibility of their girlish years. How think of them save as "the girls of the Vatican"? Julia's mind was set on the aggrandizement of her family. In point of morals Sancha was the most redoubtable of the three, pursuing love for love's sake,

indifferent to scandal, combining her impetuous licentiousness with a certain literary grace that enabled her to wield a deft pen in describing the entertainments of Alexander's Court in her long detailed letters.

During the religious festivities at Saint Peter's in connection with the welcome to the Prince and Princess of Squillace, the sermon was delivered by a chaplain of the Bishop of Segorbe, a dull, unimaginative Spaniard. Quite set up at the honor of addressing such a distinguished congregation the man spoke for more than an hour, boring everyone to distraction and especially the Pope, who had a real taste for good oratory. Lucretia and Sancha occupied prominent seats in the Choir, and finally began exchanging remarks aloud with a number of ladies who had seats below them on the floor of the church. The Pope, his Cardinals and the other prelates, who were themselves wondering when this trial would end, far from being shocked, were much amused at this scandalous behavior on the part of the two girls.

Sancha was a rich, vivacious brunette, bubbling over with piquant vitality. Her beauty made an entrancing contrast with Lucretia's tranquil, splendorous blondness. Widely different in temperament, they had one great tie in common: contempt for their respective husbands. Both could, and did, expatiate on the shortcomings of their spouses, the one an ineffectual boy in his 'teens, the other (Giovanni Sforza) a corrupt degenerate who had lost all interest in women.

The Duke of Gandia entered Rome in August of the year 1496, three months after Sancha's arrival. The Pope received him with ceremonies no less impressive. Everyone observed that the Duke, as presumptive *Gonfaloniere,* or Captain-General, of the Church, occupied a seat only one step lower than the Papal throne. Shortly, in fact, the Pontiff's army was entrusted to his command. But, though a fearless soldier like all the Borgias, Giovanni had had no training in the art of war; and the Pontiff was obliged to supply him with a military advisor. For this post he chose one of the most celebrated *condottieri* of the time, Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino. The time had come to seize the

lands of the Pope's vassals who had shown themselves disposed to blackmail the Church in her moments of weakness and desert her in her hour of danger. The very plan which Cesare Borgia was maturing in silence was to be tried with less success by his elder brother, outwardly the most brilliant of Alexander's children, but actually the least intelligent of the four.

Hostilities began with an attack on the Orsinis, the most powerful of the Pope's treacherous liegemen. The late autumn campaign of the year 1496 seemed to progress favorably for the Duke of Gandia and his master-strategist, the Duke of Urbino. Several fortresses fell to the Papal armies. Cesare Borgia, still a Cardinal, witnessed some of these operations, riding out from Rome all by himself disguised as a Knight of Rhodes. The crafty youth was taking notes first hand on the manœuvring of the great expert, Guidobaldo, on the chance that they might prove useful to him at some later time. He was so reckless on some of these scouting expeditions that on one occasion he was cut off on the shores of Lake Bracciano and escaped only through the speed of his horse.

Alexander received no help in this campaign. The Savellis, the Colonnas, and his other feuditaries, including Lucretia's husband, the Lord of Pesaro, stood neutral, but secretly hoping that some great disaster would overtake the Pope. And this was to happen, quite unexpectedly, toward the end of January, 1497. The Duke was compelled to raise the siege of Bracciano, in order to deal with a relief expedition which friends of the Orsinis were sending toward that town. The encounter took place near the village of Soriano, and proved to be one of the bloodiest and most bitterly contested engagements of the period. In the end, the Papal forces were routed, Guidobaldo was taken prisoner, and the Duke of Gandia, after deporting himself creditably, had to flee, wounded in the face. Fortunately for Alexander, before the Orsinis could exploit their victory, Gonzalo de Cordova came hurrying on from Naples at the request of "Little Ferdinand"—Ferdinand the Second—to replace the Duke of Urbino. He reorganized the Pope's scattered forces, and success in a few minor

skirmishes enabled the Pontiff to worm out of his predicament with an honorable peace. Always weak as a parent, and willing to exaggerate the capabilities of his children, Alexander treated Giovanni as though he had won a great victory, and showered him with countless honors.

At that time the Pope's master of ceremonies was a German, the famous Burckhardt, a jealous, irresponsible, and disloyal witness, who kept jotting down in his diary everything that he saw or heard concerning his patron, the Pope, taking no trouble, for the most part, to distinguish fact from gossip. Claudio had frequently discussed this famous German and his still more famous *Diarium,* with Enciso de las Casas. The latter had reached very definite opinions on the subject.

"Burckhardt," said Enciso, "reminds me of certain men of our time who write memoirs for publication after their death. They gradually acquire an author's attitude in connection with their work and do their best to make it readable and entertaining. Long periods of time go by without supplying them with anything sensational. To fill in such gaps they set down whatever anecdotes and inventions chance to occur to them, thinking they have excused themselves when they attenuate such stories with an 'it was said.' Alexander the Sixth liked Germans, and next to the Spaniards they formed the largest group among the office-holders at the Papal court. Burckhardt, however, as master of ceremonies, was concerned only with public celebrations. He never entered the private lives of the Borgias as intimately as Marrades, and other Spaniards, did. Though his *Diarium* makes pretense of such intimacy, it really contains much that is second-hand and derived from 'antechamber gossip.' Written in Latin in an almost indecipherable hand, the *Diarium* remained unpublished till early in the Eighteenth century. It came then as a great boon to Protestant historians who fell upon it with ravenous joy and took it for granted that any sentence difficult to interpret described some new crime of the Borgias."

Claudio remembered, however, that the German master of ceremonies had written with rare discrimination concerning the

later campaigns of the Duke of Gandia. Of the two commanders who saved the Pope from the consequences of Soriano, Burckhardt noted: "the one, Gonzalo de Cordova, is a real soldier and a real statesman; the other, the Duke of Gandia, is just a comedy-character dressed up in tinsel and jewelry to play a part."

Though peace was concluded with the Orsinis, the Pope had still to deal with enemies in his own house, the worst of them, his son-in-law, Giovanni Sforza. A relative of the Sforzas of Milan and associated therefore with most of the Pope's adversaries, the Lord of Pesaro had always, following policies far from ingenuous, secretly intrigued against his wife's family. Lucretia, furthermore, made no secret of the coldness and bad humor with which her husband treated her. Sforza was undoubtedly a restless, quarrelsome, mischief-making individual without restraints and without wisdom in inventing slanders to the harm of others.

"Men of his particular brand of perversion," said Enciso, "often show themselves worse than the most spiteful women in their love of scandal and unkind gossip. Young Sforza originated the more atrocious stories to the discredit of the Borgias; and his lies were repeated and improved upon by other enemies of the family, till they have come down to our day. It was he who invented the treacherous Lucretia Borgia of the legend, accusing her, his wife, of all sorts of poisonings and incests."

"Had the Borgias been the monsters he alleges," Claudio remarked, "it would have been easy enough for the Pope and his children to rid themselves of such a man. Cesare Borgia was to show later on that he needed no help in dealing with an enemy. When he had decided to kill someone, as he did on a number of occasions, he killed without excuses and with his own hands."

In the case of Sforza, Pope Borgia simply started an action for the annulment of Lucretia's marriage. The tribunal which heard the case comprised the most respectable and reputed jurists of the day. The basis of the action was Lucretia's charge that her husband had never been her husband except in name. Invited, according to the procedure of the times, to demonstrate his capacity in the presence of witnesses, Giovanni Sforza de-

clined. He declined even when Ludovico the Moor, of Milan, concerned for the reputation of his family, and to prevent a Sforza from becoming the laughing stock of Italy, made a demand similar to that of the tribunal in Rome. What hurt Sforza most in the whole affair, in addition to the allegation of impotence, was his obligation to restore the handsome dowry which Lucretia had brought him, under pain, in case of his refusal, of losing the Lordship of Pesaro which was a fief of the Holy See. Finally he fled from Rome, asserting that his life was in danger; and in this he may have been right. His venomous tongue had already begun to smirch his wife with accusations which proved not only his diseased mind, but also that he had never loved the woman he had made his wife. He it was who charged that Lucretia had been the concubine of her father and of her brother. Certainly had he lingered in Rome a few days longer, Cesare Borgia would have punished him as he deserved.

"This man of Spanish-Italian blood," Borja concluded, "so clear-headed and cold-blooded in calculations of politics or war, could fly into almost insane passions when the dignity or honor of his close relatives was concerned. Some of his crimes had no other motive than this. One aspect, furthermore, of the Spanish *pundonor,* which had come down to him from his Valencian ancestors, was that no third party could be entrusted with the vendettas of the family. He had to execute them with his own hands."

The puny Sforza took refuge in Venice, where the principal adversaries of the Pope now foregathered; and thence he continued launching new allegations against the Borgias, which became part of the Borgia legend and were later taken up by publicists of the Reform, without any appraisal of the evidence as to their truth, for the purpose of discrediting the Papacy at large. Had the Borgias been the assassins and poisoners they were supposed to be, they could easily have found the potion or the executioner to put this slanderer out of the way. Nevertheless, Giovanni Sforza continued living on in peace, his one serious worry, so far as personal danger was concerned, the chance

that he might somewhere encounter his former brother-in-law! He travelled abroad in Italy only when Cesare was at a safe distance. During the military campaigns of the future Duke Valentino, the Lord of Pesaro took care never to be within his reach, and avoided his proximity as he would have a snake's. At the time, the calumnies circulated by the degenerate husband were gathered up and passed from mouth to mouth, with the morbid interest the public always takes in scandals in the lives of the great. No one seriously believed them. After noting and repeating the protests of the Lord of Pesaro, people would be inclined to side against him on the ground that a more honorable recourse on his part would have been to submit to the test required by law. His statements were discounted by his shameful neglect of his wife! When the cowardly husband justified his flight from Rome by asserting that the Borgias were trying to poison him, it was remembered that the Sforzas were well practiced in that game themselves, especially Ludovico the Moor, who had obtained his position as Duke of Milan by publicly poisoning his nephew, the real heir to that throne.

During the year 1497, the Papal Court offered a spectacle of unparalleled brilliancy. All the children of the Pope were present in Rome except Lucretia, who had retired to a convent in shame at her divorce. Cesare, always more of a soldier than a Cardinal, was living in the Castle of Sant' Angelo, overhauling that fortress thoroughly and restoring its military efficiency. His sister-in-law, the ardorous doña Sancha, was his mistress during this time.

The young Cardinal personally was very reserved as to his relations with women. No one of his affairs ever became known through indiscretions on his part. Sancha lived in the *Palazzo Aleria* near the Castle. The lovers visited each other through a subterranean corridor, like the one which connected the fortress and the Gardens of the Vatican. But, on the whole, Cesare Borgia was more interested in glory and wealth as the bases of power. He laid no particular stress on carnal pleasures. Struggles with men had greater allurement for him than dilly-dallying

with women. If Sancha was ever much on his mind, she did not distract him from his plans for making the Pope's castle an impregnable refuge against another invasion of the capital. Before long his relations with that famous brunette became more casual, and finally they each went their respective ways at the call of new attractions.

The sensuous Sancha, who lived much to herself to the great satisfaction of her inept husband, was free to follow her lascivious whims without interference from anyone. When her other brother-in-law, the Duke of Gandia, came to Rome, she conceived a much more vehement passion for him than she had ever felt for Cesare. Giovanni was a superficial man with little inwardly to match his brilliant exterior. But his handsome physique and his perfect taste in dress and manner made him a very desirable catch for women. The Duke's wife, Maria Enriquez, and their two children, were far away in Spain, and he enlivened his temporary celibacy in Rome with passing fancies for other ladies. Rich, handsome, proud of his influence over women, swelling in conceit over the fictitious glory won for him by the Great Captain, he was the lion of the hour in that metropolis of licentious manners. Few the women who did not succumb to him whether for love or for money! Sometimes he would be missing from Court a whole day at a time; but no one was uneasy on that account. It was taken for granted that he was protracting some sentimental rendezvous, waiting for the next night's darkness to slip from the lady's house without damaging her name.

In June the affairs of Naples again pressed urgently upon the Pope's attention. Don Ferrante the Second died without leaving an heir. By this time Gonzalo de Cordova had driven the French from almost every stronghold in the kingdom. Frederick of Aragon, the late King's uncle, much beloved by the Neapolitans, was thus left free to ascend the throne. Alexander the Sixth found himself called upon for the fourth time to bestow the investiture of Naples. Cesare Borgia, recently named chamberlain to the Pope, was now named Legate *a latere* to solemnize Frederick's coronation. Giovanni Borgia was to be sent with

him to be invested with the Duchies of Benevento, Terracina and Pontecorbo, which the new King was granting him as a bid for the Pope's favor.

La Vannozza swelled with a mother's pride, quite understandable in a woman of her class, when she thought of two children of hers going to Naples, the one as a mighty Duke, the other as a Cardinal endowed with powers that made him a second Pope. Eager to see them before their departure, she invited them to a farewell banquet. Vannozza was a Roman girl at bottom. All the money she made she invested in the city, buying houses, and especially inns and taverns which brought her in good profits through the large number of pilgrims who were always coming to the Holy City. (Many clerics, also, were interested in hotels, a business that proved very fruitful at times of Jubilee. But when transient worshippers were few and the city returned to its normal state, such hospices became resorts for soldiers and harlots; and their ecclesiastical proprietors found themselves traffickers in immorality.) The mother of the great Borgias had built herself a house with a garden and vineyard near the Church of Saint Peter *in Vinculis*. It was there that she held her banquet, inviting thither Cesare and Giovanni; their younger brother, Geoffrey, with Sancha, his wife; and the cousin of them all, Giovanni de Borja, Cardinal of Monreale.

The night was far advanced when Vannozza's guests took their departure. Giovanni and Cesare were the first to leave; the one on horseback, the other on a mule, the usual mount for a Cardinal at that time. In front of him on his charger, Giovanni carried a footman, and on the crupper behind, a man of unknown identity, short of stature, with his face hidden under a mask. There was nothing unusual in such a thing in the Rome of those days. To avoid recognition, ladies and gentlemen rode or walked about at night in dominos; and even the bearers of secret or private missives went in disguise. It was a romantic, dangerous, tragic life that people led in those days, a life fraught with sinister intrigue and shot through with deadly passions. Quite naturally then might a custom of the Carnival season be continued

through the whole year! For that matter, the Duke had been going about for weeks with this same mysterious attendant, who accompanied him everywhere in disguise without anyone's ever discovering who he was.

The two brothers rode along till they were in front of the *Palazzo Cesarini,* a mansion built by Rodrigo Borgia before he became Pope, and thereafter bestowed upon Cardinal Ascanio Sforza. There they separated. Giovanni excused himself on the pretext that he was going for a ride, alone. This, combining with the presence of the man in the mask, gave Cesare the impression that his brother had one of his usual *rendezvous.* That was the thought of the Pope and the other members of the family when, on the following day, the fifteenth of June, the Duke did not return to his apartments in the Vatican. It was taken for granted that he was hiding in the *boudoir* of some lady, waiting for night to come that he might escape the vigilance of husband or father. There was some uneasiness as the day wore on and it became known that the Duke's footman had been found at daybreak, in the *Piazzetta degli Ebrei,* not far from the place where the brothers had separated, and so badly wounded that he could hardly speak. The Duke's charger had also been found wandering in saddle and bridle about nearby streets. The dying man was able only to explain that he had followed his lord to the square in question and had been told to wait there an hour, after which, if the Duke had not returned, he should return to the Vatican. How and by whom he had been attacked and mortally wounded, he was unable to say.

The family still believed that the Duke would eventually come home. But on the sixteenth his continued absence became the subject of alarm. Vainly the Prefect of Rome with his gendarmes searched the streets and the houses of the neighborhood where the Pope's eldest son had last been seen.

Finally investigations turned toward the Tiber, which often buried the evidences of crime in its dark waters. Two slaves were found, able and willing to tell of certain things which they had seen. They had been awake that night on the river-

bank, one of them watching some piles of fuel that had just been put ashore from a vessel; the other, a boatman by trade, sleeping at first in his boat, but awakened by the cold just in time to see what the other saw.

It was toward daybreak. Two men issued from a street that ran along the nearby Hospice of the Slavs, so-called, apparently to see whether the riverbanks were free of people. Finding no one, they retraced their steps, soon after returning with two other individuals who stationed themselves on the shore, as though on watch, while the first two again disappeared into the street whence they had come. This pair returned for the third time. There was much signalling between them and the men on the shore. Finally they came forward fearlessly, leading a white horse ridden by another man. Across the saddle in front of him the rider was holding the body of a dead man, the hands and feet dangling limp at either side. The party followed the shore of the Tiber till they came to a place where a sewer emptied into the stream. There the man in the saddle turned his mount tail to the water, while his companions removed the corpse from the horse's back, lifting it by the arms and legs. After swinging it to and fro a number of times to gain momentum, they threw it far out into the stream. When the man on horseback turned his horse around, he observed that the victim's cape was floating on the water. He called the attention of his companions to it. The four men then pelted the garment with stones until it sank out of sight. Their work done, the five departed, in company, down a different street.

Assailed by the Prefect because they had not reported such evidence earlier, the humble charcoal-burner and the boatman replied simply enough: they saw someone thrown into the Tiber almost every night; but this was the first time anyone had come to question them about such matters! (That, however, was nothing peculiar to the times of the Borgias. During the Fifteenth century, robberies and assassinations were daily episodes of Roman life; and so they continued to be under Alexander's successors.)

Three hundred fisherman along the Tiber were enlisted to search the stream; and by noon on the sixteenth one of them had found the corpse of the Duke of Gandia in a net that was being dragged near the Church of *Santa Maria del Popolo*. The body was fully clothed. The throat had been cut and the breast pierced by nine dagger thrusts. Not one of the buttons on the Duke's marvelous vest had been disturbed. The long perfumed gloves were still hanging from his belt. Thirty gold ducats in his purse had not been taken.

The body, hidden under a cloak, was conveyed in a boat to the Castle of Sant' Angelo. There it was stripped, washed, and reclothed in the gorgeous uniform of the *Gonfaloniere*. After lying in state in the Church of *Santa Maria del Popolo* for the rest of the afternoon and evening, it was buried that very night. Behind the open coffin, which left the features of the dead Duke exposed to view, marched all the Roman nobility not at outs with the Borgias, the Ambassadors of Spain and Milan, and many Cardinals and Bishops. Meantime the Spaniards who had fought under Giovanni Borgia during his last campaign were marching, sword in hand, through the streets of Rome, vowing vengeance on the assassins, and thereby endangering the lives of many innocent citizens. Legend has it that as the ghastly procession passed the Castle of Sant' Angelo, a heart-rending scream came from one of the windows. It was the Pope. He had made his way to the fortress from the Vatican through the secret passageway, to look for one last time upon the face of his favorite child, who lay lifeless in a coffin below him under the flickering purple glare of two hundred torches.

Alexander's grief knew no bounds. He raved like a lunatic. The man of the South with all his devious complexities of impulse and violences of remorse, had gained the upper hand, for the moment, over the cool, serene, good-humored politician. For three days he kept to his chamber, sobbing like a child. Through the doors his frightened servants could hear heart-rending lamentations mingled with prayers and terrible curses. The access lasted, without a moment's calm, from Wednesday until Satur-

day. During all that time his most intimate friend, the Cardinal of Segovia, remained outside the Pontiff's door. He was the only person to whom the grief-stricken parent would listen. He was the one who finally persuaded him to take a little food.

On this prolonged attack of unbridled anguish followed a period of such great prostration and humility that many feared the Pope had lost his mind. He talked of abdicating the Papal throne and devoting himself to a life of penance in absolute renunciation of the world. He astonished his Cardinals by a sermon in which he accused himself of being a cause of scandal, asking forgiveness of God and men, and swearing straightway a thorough-going reformation of manners and morals in the Church (a purification all the Popes had been promising, but which none of them had had the courage to undertake!). His harangue was broken at many points by lamentations, beatings of his breast, bursts of despair vented in strange metaphors in oriental style. "Had We seven thrones," he said, "We would resign them all, so only the Duke could be brought back to life!" What seemed to give him most bitter sorrow was the thought that his boy, the most fashionable and best mannered youth of his time, should have been fished by the net of a fisherman from the mouth of a sewer in the most polluted part of the Tiber. "Like a bag of manure!" cried the Pontiff in helpless sorrow.

Nature herself seemed to intervene in a most dramatic way in this tempestuous grief. A violent storm broke over Rome. The river rose and flooded the streets. A bolt of lightning struck the private apartments of the Pope and also the Castle of Sant' Angelo, overthrowing the colossal statue of the Archangel which served as crown to the ancient Tomb of Hadrian. Popular superstition elaborated the details of the scene, asserting that during the night at the height of the storm, a procession of ghosts had filed through the naves of the Basilica and that the Duke himself had appeared in the Castle calling for vengeance on his murderers.

Rodrigo Borgia, however, had been a man of action in his youth. Unable to endure an insult, he soon abandoned his at-

titude of humility and resignation to issue furious orders to the Prefect of Rome and to the Spanish Captains in the Papal service to use every effort to solve the crime. The assassins of the Duke had to be found! And the Pope spent his time devising atrocious punishments to be inflicted upon them. But day after day went by without discovery of the slightest clue that could ever bring the truth to light.

Claudio Borja reflected that more than three centuries had passed, without producing any convincing identification of the assassins. When we think of the vengeful spirit that prevailed in the life of those times, Giovanni Borgia, with his incorrigible philandering, might seem destined to have perished in some such way. In the weeks following his death everyone, including his father, believed that he had been killed by some jealous husband. The fact that he had taken off his gloves and tucked them under his belt seemed to indicate that he had been attacked just after removing them to offer his hand to a lady.

Gradually, as the crime continued unsolved, the scope of conjecture was enlarged. The woman who had made the midnight appointment with the Duke might have been acting in collusion with individuals who were trying to get rid of him. The presence of the unknown man who had attended the Duke constantly during the weeks previous and had been his guide on the night of the murder, lent color to that theory. Suspicions turned upon the Orsinis, enemies of the Pope, and of the Duke especially, since the latter, because of his boastings of recent victories, was even more insufferable to them than his father. They turned also upon Cardinal Ascanio Sforza who had quarrelled with the Duke just previously; upon Bartolommeo Albiano, one of his avowed enemies; upon the Duke of Urbino, who had been taken prisoner at Soriano and was furious with the Borgias because they had contributed nothing to his ransom; upon Giovanni Sforza, the divorced husband of Lucretia; and even upon the Colonnas, well known as friends of the Pope's family. Alexander investigated the various charges with a tearful resignation that showed him admirably clear-headed and impartial. He

publicly exonerated Cardinal Sforza, who had been his enemy but also his friend, and who seemed most seriously compromised by certain facts in connection with the case. So, likewise, he defended others designated by public rumor. He held his peace only in connection with the Orsinis. He did not accuse them, but he did not exonerate them. Claudio, for his part, believed the Orsinis guilty, as he reviewed the summaries of the case made by the few modern historians who had conscientiously studied the lives of the Borgias without regard to the passions and the bias prevailing at the moment of the crime. Such studies, for the most part, even though hostile to Alexander, tended to prove the assassination of his eldest son a reprisal of the Orsini family for the death of Virginio Orsini, the best captain of their party, who had died a prisoner in the *Castel dell' Uovo* at Naples, as his partisans claimed, of poison.

The desperate sorrow of the Pontiff stirred all Christendom to tears. Kings and heads of States made haste to send their condolences. Even the austere Savonarola halted his diatribes in the presence of a father's bereavement. And eventually the Pope fell silent, refraining from new accusations. Why? Evidently because nothing he might do could bring his son back to life again. In fact nine months went by before gossip, even on the part of the Pope's most bitter enemies, linked the murder with the name of Cardinal Cesare Borgia, who had gone on to Naples just after his brother's death to confer the investiture upon the new King. The monstrous suspicion that Cesare had put his own brother to death had so far occurred to no one. It was in Venice as usual that the infamous slander was born after nine months' gestation and doubtless at the instigation of that malicious and perverse chatterbox, Giovanni Sforza. In all his readings in connection with the case, Claudio could think of no single fact to support the imputation of such a senseless fratricide. That Cesare Borgia committed crimes, well and good; but why add another to them without the slightest basis of probability? Such of his enemies as sustained the charge described him as an inordinately ambitious man who found his brother an obstacle in the path of his

own glory and made away with him in hopes of resigning his red hat, becoming a secular prince, and succeeding the Duke of Gandia as commander of the Papal troops.

"There could have been little to that!" thought Borja. "Giovanni was murdered at a time when he had lost all prestige through the defeat inflicted upon him by the Orsinis at Soriano; when everyone was convinced—even his father, though Alexander did his best to hide it—that the Duke was, in fact, a comedy-general, brilliant, attractive, generous as a man, but without any military or political aptitudes whatsoever. Giovanni had eliminated himself from any future command. The interests of the Borgias, therefore, were inevitably falling into Cesare's hands. Cesare could have had no reason for hurrying his accession by removing the discredited Duke through a crime, which, if discovered, could only cost him the affection of his father and his family.

Equally absurd the allegation that Alexander the Sixth, whether through fear, or to preserve the good name of his house, compromised with Cesare after the latter had confessed his guilt. Rodrigo Borgia nourished violent family passions. He could never have forgiven such a monstrous crime. Had he judged Cesare a fractricide he could never have shown such confidence as he reposed in him during the ensuing years; nor could he have experienced such sincere joy in the young man's victories. To fix the crime on Cesare, his enemies pointed to the Pope's sudden silence after his desperate mourning during the days following the murder. Claudio thought such conduct quite in keeping with the Pope's character as a passionate, hot-blooded man. After a noisy outburst, after an explosion of hate, came a sudden emotional fatigue, counselling opposite sentiments of gentleness and forgiveness. The Pope may have realized that sometimes it is more painful to punish one's enemies than to forgive them. Convinced that the Orsinis were the authors, direct or indirect, of the Duke's death, he did not take the life of any one of them. Even Giuliano della Rovere, his bitterest foe, and other Cardinals less hostile, were repeatedly in his power, offering ready facility

for his personal vengeance. Yet the Pope, who has been accused of numberless crimes and was the alleged inventor of the Borgia poisons, took no steps, let alone against their lives, even against their comfort and their freedom. On one occasion at a Consistory, alluding to the violent acts of his son, Cesare, who was really a vindictive person and had no scruples against "exterminating his adversaries" if it seemed useful to do so, the Pope said:

"I am not of his opinion—perhaps because I am no longer young. At any rate, I shall die with a clear conscience and with the thought that many times I might have squared accounts with people who have done me great harm, and yet refrained from doing so."

Cesare, furthermore, was never underhanded or secretive in his crimes of violence. After laying the "beautiful trap" at Sinigaglia to do away with his rebellious Captains, he boasted of the skill with which he had made his plans. When he killed, he did so either with his own hands under the sway of great passion, or else entrusting the task to agents and publicly assuming responsibility. It was in the Vatican and almost in his father's presence that he stabbed the Spaniard, Pedro Calderon, who had boasted of relations with Lucretia Borgia. This affair, more verbal than carnal, and the exchange of love letters in Spanish with Pietro Bembo, the future Cardinal, are the only amorous adventures of Lucretia of which a record has been preserved.

Like all men of action during this period, when crimes of blood were judged less harshly than they are today, Cesare was proud of his murders and justified them, as he put it, by the need of "killing before you are killed." In the course of his brief and spectacular life no one ever accused him, in so many words, and with proof, of his brother's death. Everyone took the imputation lightly. Only as the years went by did slander take advantage of Cesare's triumphs to lend color to the charge of fratricide. Seeing him victor over the petty tyrants of Italy, friend to the King of France, conqueror of one castle after an-

other and bidding fair to place the crown of all Italy upon his brow, his enemies said that "Cesare would never have been what he was had his brother, Giovanni, been still alive"; and the inference of such words was that he had reached this power over his brother's body.

But at such insinuations Claudio shrugged his shoulders. On that basis, he thought, any man who inherits from people before him or who uses the work of predecessors for his own greatness might be accused of having murdered them to smoothe his own path.

CHAPTER II

The Duke of Valence

IN the end neither Church reform, nor abdication, nor withdrawal from the world! . . .

"The Pope," thought Borgia, "acted as do many wilful, energetic men when they issue at last from some great storm and recover poise of spirit. Alexander reminds one of the soldier or sailor who makes the vow when his life is in danger and forgets it afterwards."

Troubles with the turbulent vassals of the Holy See and fatherly interest in the aggrandizement of his children, soon drove the murdered youth from Alexander's thoughts and brought him back to the routine of his daily activities.

Cesare Borgia was deporting himself in all respects like a secular prince. Whenever he appeared in public, it was with a sword at his belt, in a gorgeous costume in Spanish style—black throughout, that is, with a long white plume on his cap. Occasionally the people of Rome would see him on horseback in turban and kaftan, since it still amused him to dress in Turkish fashion, in memory of the late Prince Djem. His famous sword was a magnificent work of art. The blade was engraved with the outstanding episodes in the life of Julius Cæsar and bore a Latin inscription which was to be the emblem of his short adventurous career: *"Aut Cæsar, aut nihil."*

The family had long been pursuing an ambition which might be called the "Borgia policy." From the time of Calixtus the Third the Borgias had been trying to create an Italian State which would serve as a prop to the Papacy. Cesare thought himself the equal of any royal heir-apparent destined some day to wear a crown; or, if difference there were, it was because he had still to win his kingdom by his own efforts, relying either

on stratagem or on the sword. The obstacle most immediately in his path was his red hat. Once rid of that, he would be free to achieve things which none of the Borgia Captains so far had been able to attain, neither the arrogant Pedro Luís, the favorite nephew of Calixtus the Third; nor his own brother, the handsome and fatuous Duke of Gandia. That the Cardinal of Valencia was thinking of abandoning his ecclesiastical career was a matter of common knowledge in Rome. The Pope was saying as much himself, remarking that "in view of Cesare's worldly inclinations, it would be much better for him to lay aside the purple, in the interests of his soul's salvation." Taking this change of status for granted, Cesare centered his ambitions on the reigning house of Naples and thought of marrying Charlotte, daughter to that Frederick on whom he himself had bestowed the crown as his father's Legate. Through such a match Cesare hoped to occupy the throne of Naples by inheritance. All the Borgias regarded that realm as theirs by right, since it had been created by Alfonso the Magnanimous, patron of Calixtus the Third, and had thereafter been held by the descendants of a Valencian bastard, who had been a ward and protégé of Calixtus before the latter came to be Pope. Adding to Naples the States of the Church and the territories which Cesare would be conquering, a great Italian domain could be founded under a Borgia dynasty, which would protect the Church and control elections to the tiara. However, the reigning head of the House of Aragon curtly dismissed the suggestion that he give his daughter to Cesare Borgia: "My son-in-law is not going to be a parson, son of another parson!" And Frederick held obdurate; he would not listen to the insinuations which Alexander and Cesare kept making. "Let the Pope change the regulations of the Church, if this young man wants to be my son-in-law! Let him declare publicly that a Cardinal may take a wife!"

But shortly perceiving that he was in a very weak position without the Pope's support, Frederick countered with an offer to marry his nephew, Alfonso of Aragon (doña Sancha's brother) to Lucretia Borgia, the divorced wife of the Lord of Pesaro. The

two young people were both of illegitimate birth; but that was no obstacle in an era of bastard princes. Alexander finally accepted the proposal, hoping it would prove to be the entering wedge for forcing the match between Cesare and Charlotte.

The wedding took place in Rome early in the summer of the year 1498. The bridegroom appeared in the Eternal City as Duke of Bisceglia and Quadrata, investitures which the King of Naples had bestowed upon him for the occasion. In contrast to Sancha, his sister, Alfonso was a weak, timid youth. Seventeen years old at the time (one year younger than Lucretia), he seemed to feel no great inclination toward matrimony. The Pope's daughter, on the other hand, conceived a real passion for this young, handsome and fashionable prince. Her spirits, theretofore so indolent, seemed to take fire at his alluring contact. It was a true love on her part, the Duke of Bisceglia allowing himself to be admired and politely requiting his bride's infatuation. At any rate, this second marriage of Lucretia's in no sense resembled her first union, which had been cancelled seven months before. Alfonso and the Pope's daughter settled in the *Palazzo di Santa Maria in Portico,* while doña Adriana and Giulia Farnese continued living in the *Palazzo Orsini* on the *Monte Giordano.*

The wedding gave occasion for protracted festivities, duly recorded in their magnificent details by doña Sancha's agile pen. The nuptial banquet took place at night and the dancing continued till sunrise. The Pope himself had an absorbing passion for this amusement, a predilection which the Italians attributed to his Spanish blood. Lucretia, too, and her brother, Cesare, were both accomplished dancers. As for Madonna Lucrezia, it was a positive delight for the Cardinals and other notables at Court to watch the entrancing grace with which she could execute Spanish movements in particular, a gift doubtless inherited from her Valencian grandmothers. The Borgia clan (including the more or less genuine bearers of the name who had come on from Spain in quest of fortune), the Roman gentry allied with the family, and the Cardinals belonging to Alexander's faction, all

took part in this gaiety. In the terms of the prevailing etiquette, it was a great honor to serve the Pontiff's food and drink. One nobleman held the prerogative of pouring his wine, and another that of handing him his napkin—"Gentleman of the Napkin," he was called. The feast itself lasted three hours; and before the tables were cleared, His Holiness had his gifts to the bride brought into the room: two huge trays of engraved silver bearing bowls of almost equal size, which in turn were filled with smaller gifts, including jewels; two candelabra of the same metal large enough to carry torches; a silver ship, full-rigged with unfurled sails, the hull fitted with lock and key to protect a cargo of precious spices; a bowl for Holy Water with a hyssop, but filled not with the sacred liquid but with a gorgeous necklace of gold and precious stones. Then came the turn of the Cardinals to offer their gifts of rings and other jewels; for Madonna Lucrezia was a princess, properly to be showered with expensive homage, if the favor of her omnipotent sire were to be retained.

After the banquet the company filed off to the new Borgia "Rooms"—new since Pinturicchio had just finished decorating them. There Cesare had arranged a pageant. One of the "Rooms," where the throne of His Holiness was located, had been made into a forest, while the neighboring halls showed a waterfall plunging into a pool in which a number of live snakes were swimming about to give a touch of reality. Bellowing and leaping about on all fours were guests and intimates of the Pontiff dressed as wild animals—the Marquis of Barletta, as a fox; don Rodrigo Corella as a giraffe; the Prince of Squillace, doña Sancha's husband, as a wild duck; the Prior of Saint Eufemia, Cardinal Borgia's brother, as an elephant; don Juan Canos as a stag; the Frenchman, Nogue, as a lion; finally Cesare Borgia himself as a unicorn. The imitations were not necessarily exact. Costumes of silk and brocade suggested more or less exactly the colors of the different beasts. Only the heads made close approaches to reality. They came dancing into the Pope's presence, feigning a battle to control the "water-hole." At the height of the combat the unicorn appeared "with a great

horn on his forehead, as the beast is in Nature," and established peace among them. At the end of this "monkey play"—so they called it—the Cardinal of Valencia begged permission of His Holiness to dance "the high-low" with his sister, Lucretia. The performance was a great success. The two young Borgias excelled especially in Spanish and Moorish creations, at that time still a novelty in Rome. The most noisy in the applause was the Pope himself, who took the greatest pride in the success of his children.

"He was the fond parent *par excellence,*" thought Borja, "and in this respect, the counterpart of Ferdinand the Catholic, another man of redoubtable force of character, but who was utterly powerless to control his children. Ferdinand would weep like a child at the disobediences of his daughters, especially those of Joan the Mad, who was completely under the influence of her husband."

In these aristocratic festivities, manners affecting the relations of men and women were very different from anything we know today. Though there were chairs in abundance, chivalry demanded that the men sit on the floor at the feet of their ladies, resting their backs against the ladies' legs. Or a man might sit in his lady's lap. Doña Sancha relates that on this occasion the Cardinal of Valencia came and sat in her lap when he was tired of dancing; while her husband, the Prince of Squillace, sat, in similar service, in Lucretia's lap.

All the ladies of the Borgia entourage wore costumes imported from Valencia, with ornaments of hammered gold and glass beads of various colors—"in chaplain style" as the phrase went—which were then the latest novelty in female fashion.

After the pageant was over, Cesare and his companions made presents of their expensive masquerades to the servants in attendance, and donned court costumes with swords to continue dancing with the ladies.

The following day another party was given in the so-called *Belvedere* of the Vatican, which lasted from eight in the evening until four in the morning. Companies of clowns, acrobats

and sleight-of-hand performers furnished entertainment till midnight, when Cesare and Lucretia gave another exhibition of the "high-low," this time at the Pontiff's personal request. The collation was served at dawn—a hundred great trays of sweetmeats and cakes, the frostings inscribed with Latin verses in honor of the bride, the groom, and Alexander the Sixth.

The last act in the gaieties consisted of a bull fight held in the gardens of the Vatican before an audience of more than ten thousand people. The Cardinal of Valencia rode out on the field at the head of a squadron of twelve horsemen. He was dressed in the Moorish costume worn by the Saracens of Spain, a white and red smock, on which doña Sancha had herself worked an embroidery in gold; a crimson cap with a plume; blue leggings, and a sword forged to order for the occasion. He was mounted on a white horse, richly caparisoned; and in his right hand he carried a long lance, also the gift of doña Sancha. Twelve boys dressed in yellow silk and crimson velvet marched ahead of him as squires.

The twelve knights were all Spaniards, among them don Juan de Cervallon, don Guillen Ramon de Borja, don Ramon and don Juan Castellar, and don Miguel Corella. They too were dressed in Moorish costumes and rode horses with rich trappings.

Cesare was footing all the bills for the entertainment; and the Roman populace acclaimed the generous Borgia who was offering such an interesting spectacle at his own expense. The stands were filled with ladies of the pontifical Court or of the Roman aristocracy, many of them wearing the Spanish gowns they had ordered years before for the merry-making that followed the conquest of Granada. Eight bulls were "run" in a spectacle five hours long. The Cardinal of Valencia disposed of two of them—the first, a clean kill from the saddle with a lance-thrust through the heart; the second, from on foot, the *matador* holding his cape in one hand and his sword in the other. In this case, too, only one blow was necessary; and the crowd burst into cheers in honor of "our Cæsar," astonished at the surprising strength of this frail young member of the Sacred College.

Among the knights who participated in these profane festivities, marking such a happy day for the governors of the Church, Claudio's interest centered on a character who had begun to figure in all the escapades of the Cardinal of Valencia and was to be seen with him everywhere, as inseparable from him as his shadow from his body. Don Micalet Corella was a Valencian nobleman, whom the Spanish residents in Rome called *don Miguelito,* in Castilian style, and on whom the Italians were to confer a rather terrible celebrity, months later, as *don Michelotto.*

Natural son of the Marquis of Cocentaina, a member of the Valencian gentry, don Michelotto had come to Rome in company with a legitimate brother, Rodrigo Corella, to seek his fortune under the wing of the Borgias. The two families had been on friendly terms from the days of Calixtus the Third. Alfonso the Magnanimous had a Corella among his intimates; and this man, a great friend of Alfonso de Borja, had assisted in the education of the royal bastard, don Ferrante, who later ascended the throne of Naples. Years afterwards, when Rodrigo Borgia went as Cardinal-Legate to Spain, he met the successor of that Corella, the Marquis of Cocentaina, residing at the moment in Valencia. Then, when Borgia became Pope, Rodrigo and Micalet, the two sons of the Marquis, straightway sailed for Rome. Rodrigo Corella was a second son, a young man of a serious turn of mind, with prospects of inheriting the Marquisate of Corella some day, through the death of his elder brother. The Pope took him into his personal service as friend, confidant and bodyguard, all the more since he showed himself a trustworthy secretary and a courageous man-at-arms. The bastard, don Micalet, was attracted rather toward Cesare, and served him all his life long with the dog-like humility and devotion a ferocious mastiff might feel for the hand that feeds and pets him.

Don Micalet had come to Italy in high spirits; and no environment could better have served his character, in view of the absolute contempt for human life that prevailed in that country in those days, as well among the great lords as among the lower classes. In Micalet's eyes the killing of a man was all in the day's

work, and the sword-thrust in loyal combat or the stab between the shoulder-blades, were on a par with him so long as the foe in question was suppressed. His extraordinary strength was a matter rather of nerve than of muscle. Incapable of forgetting an insult, and with no respect whatever for anyone in the bad graces of his patron, he soon acquired a terrifying renown that was in strange contrast with the frail body and slight stature which inclined everyone to address him in diminutives: *Micalet, Miguelito, Michelotto.* Later on in Cesare's career, when the Cardinal had become a general, this faithful cut-throat, with nothing but contempt for the rules and scruples that guided other men, came to be a competent strategist. He was Cesare's chief-of-staff, and when everyone else abandoned his master, Micalet stood loyal. As Captain don Miguel Corella, he fought at the side of don Hugo de Moncada, another famous Spaniard, as well as under the most famous Italian *condottieri* of that time. He had some acquaintance with Leonardo da Vinci, one of Cesare's military engineers. His life was probably as short as that of his protector, at whose heels he could always be found, growling and snarling like a faithful watch-dog.

The Pope noted this disquieting little man wandering about the halls of the Vatican with set jaws and tiny eyes, and a sharp, restless gaze that seemed to be darting needle-thrusts in all directions. Alexander had a genial manner toward everyone who came from his native country. At Micalet he would shake a pontifical forefinger and warn: "Micalet, Micalet!" He seemed to sense beforehand the evil deeds that might be expected of such a man-eater. In his early days at the Vatican, Micalet figured in a number of brawls with other Spaniards where weapons were drawn. Gradually, however, he became attached to Cesare, a youth of his own age, and began spending all his time with him.

The other Corella was to be seen at all the public ceremonies at the Vatican, figuring among the gentlemen of the Pope's retinue. Alexander awarded him a number of benefices, especially after don Rodrigo had saved his life. The Pope was walking one afternoon in the Gardens near the *Belvedere,* when his

party came upon a lion which had been kept in a cage near by and had somehow escaped. There was a general scampering in all directions of prelates, domestics, chamberlains and servants. In a flash the Pontiff found himself abandoned by all save the young Spaniard.

"Holy Father," said the latter coolly, "just step behind me and keep close to my body!"

Rodrigo was a clear-headed soldier himself and followed Corella's directions to the letter. The young Spaniard walked ahead with his cape wrapped around his left arm and his sword in his right hand, always managing to face the animal and keep between it and the Pope. The painful situation lasted for some minutes. The lion seemed puzzled at the strange appearance made by two human forms always making the same motions. Finally, the alarm given by the fugitives attracted a squad of Spanish soldiers from the Pontiff's Guard, and they succeeded in driving the lion back into its cage. Alexander the Sixth at once assigned an income of two thousand ducats to his rescuer and would have made him a Cardinal had not Rodrigo preferred waiting for the Marquisate that seemed due him in his own family, to binding himself to an ecclesiastical career. His speculation was a good one. Rodrigo went back to Valencia in due time, married, and assumed the title of his elder brother, the Marquis of Cocentaina.

As for don Micalet, if he appeared in society at the Vatican at all, it was in company with his lord and friend, the Cardinal; or in connection with bull-fights and other forms of entertainment requiring courage and skill. He was already making a name for himself. For Cesare's enemies *don Michelotto* was the dragon that never slept, and stood ready ever to administer a death-dealing slap in defense of his master. Eventually, the propaganda against the Borgias tried to identify the masked companion of the Duke of Gandia, who had been with him on the night of his murder, as don Michelotto. The slight stature of the two men was the one fact tending to justify such a charge. However, the Duke was well acquainted with don Michelotto as

a familiar of his house, and could not have mistaken him for his servant, however many disguises the other may have worn. At the time of the murder no one thought of making such an accusation. Michelotto continued frequenting the Vatican and was accepted by the Pope.

A month after Lucretia's wedding Cardinal Cesare Borgia resigned his red hat and the Sacred College ratified his withdrawal. Gacilaso de la Vega, the Spanish Ambassador, protested the move before the Consistory on instructions from his King. Ferdinand the Catholic was doubtless afraid to see the young Borgia transformed into a secular prince. He was the most headstrong of the Pope's children and would not be as easy to handle as the light-headed Duke of Gandia had been. Alexander quieted the Spanish Ambassador and the Cardinals of the Spanish faction by assuring them that the benefices left vacant by the withdrawal of Cesare from the Sacred College would all be divided among prelates friendly to the Court of Spain; and Cesare was straightway released from his vows. As a matter of fact, he had taken only lower orders, and his case was not without precedent.

At just this time an envoy from the King of France was landing at Ostia with documents of great interest to the Pontiff and his son: Charles the Eighth, leader of the expedition to Naples, had died, and his cousin, Louis the Twelfth, was ascending the French throne. The new King was not on good terms with his wife and was eager to divorce her, in order to marry the beautiful Anne of Brittany, a union which would have the double advantage of satisfying his personal inclinations and adding a new domain to the French crown. The Pope was well aware of the French King's hankerings and showed himself not unwilling to satisfy them; but he thought the occasion propitious for striking a good bargain that would set the boy Cesare really on his feet at Court. Cesare, likewise, was coming to feel that Louis the Twelfth was the only monarch capable of supporting his ambitions. The other sovereigns seemed to be afraid of him.

Young Borgia was surrounded with Spaniards. Castilian and

Valencian were the languages he spoke among his intimates. But, unlike his father, he had no childhood memories to bind him to the land of his remoter origins. Born in Rome, of a Roman mother, he was an Italian through and through and had no sentimental bias toward Ferdinand the Catholic. He knew the Spanish King for the shrewd old fox at diplomacy that he was, ever up to something, continually out-manœuvring the other sovereigns of the day, and unwilling that anyone should thrive in his shade. Cesare managed to convince his father that, in following the policies of the King of Spain, the Borgias would never be more than pawns in the latter's hands, always being pushed blindly about without knowing whither and for what purpose. It would be far wiser to team with the King of France, not so crafty an individual and in greater need of help from the Pope.

Alexander arrived at an agreement with Louis the Twelfth. Cesare, now a secular prince, would go to France as special envoy, to deliver to the King a document of divorce from his first wife and a dispensation to marry Anne of Brittany. Louis the Twelfth would invest the Pope's son with the fief of Valence, meantime promoting the latter from a county to a duchy. So the sometime Spanish Archbishop, Cardinal of Valencia, would be recast as a French duke with a position at the Court of France. But there was a secret compact in addition. The French King would procure a match for Cesare with some lady of royal lineage (Charlotte of Naples, perhaps); and the Holy Father, in exchange, would furnish Louis the Twelfth with ways and means for seizing the thrones of Milan and Naples under better auspices than his predecessor had enjoyed; whereupon Louis the Twelfth would help the new "Duke of Valence" to reconstitute the Church domain within the boundaries established early in the Middle Ages by Pepin and Charlemagne, and dispossess one by one the feudal barons who were usurping rightful properties of the Pope and representing an ever-present danger to the Pope's security.

During the month of August, 1498, all Rome was agog with Cesare's preparations for departure. Everyone knew that he was

going to France to be made a Duke. But the other conditions remained a profound secret.

A typical hero of the Renaissance, blood-thirsty, ostentatious, enamored of external display, ready to debate the design of a tapestry, the authorship of an ancient statue, or the engraving on a dagger blade with the artists of his Court, between two intrigues in politics or two battles on the field, Cesare busied himself for weeks with preparations for his journey, gathering garments, jewels, weapons, bridles, saddles, classical manuscripts—all sorts of priceless gifts to astounding values in money. For incidental expenses alone his chests carried two hundred thousand ducats in gold, money which he and his father raised for the most part from Jews resident in Rome. His suite comprised thirty knights, a physician, a major-domo, and a hundred servants, pages and squires. The baggage train reached twelve carts and fifty pack-mules. A whole galley had to be set aside for his jousting-horses. In addition to the warship sent by Louis the Twelfth to provide berths for himself and his staff, two merchantmen and five galleys were chartered in the port of Ostia to make up a little fleet for the voyage to Marseilles.

Cesare's journey from Marseilles to Turenne, where Louis the Twelfth was holding Court at the moment, was a brilliant cavalcade. Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, resident at Avignon as Papal Legate, made haste to re-splice his bonds with the Borgias the moment he saw them in alliance with the French King. Rodrigo Borgia had beaten him front and rear. Unable to find new allies to combat him, the Cardinal saw himself obliged to turn flatterer. Such conduct on the part of the future Pope Julius the Second, Claudio could view only with contempt, though, in spite of his many bendings of the knee before his rival, Alexander the Sixth, the histories have usually portrayed him as an energetic, straightforward man, incapable of servilities. Borgia might have crushed the man at this time, as an act of well-merited vengeance. Instead, he forgave him with the good nature only a strong man can feel, never suspecting that after his death, Rovere would take it upon himself to blacken the

memory of the Borgias through a slanderous biographical legend that would hold the field for three centuries. Whenever he spoke of Alexander in private, Rovere called him "the Jew," "the renegade Jew," or simply "His Circumcised Holiness." (Jewish converts appeared in considerable numbers among the Spaniards domiciled in Rome, and the Italians, in their hatred for everything foreign, liked to call all Spaniards Jews.)

At any rate, the hypocritical Legate welcomed Cesare Borgia to Avignon with princely honors, and the banquets and receptions he accorded the son of "His Circumcised Holiness" cost him seven thousand gold ducats in a week's time. In enthusiastic letters to the Pontiff he praised the "modesty" and the "other virtues" of the young man whom everyone was now beginning to call "Duke Valentine." Claudio noted that such praises were not all to be accounted mere flattery. Words change their meaning as time goes by. "Modesty" for Rovere meant "sociability" or "attractiveness"; and among the "other virtues" he surely reckoned fashionable dressing, good education, especially in letters, and wittiness in conversation.

The Duke moved forward on his way from triumph to triumph. The French barons, acting under royal orders, everywhere welcomed him with the magnificence due an heir-aspirant to some royal throne. Lyons offered him a feast fit for a Pantagruel—three hundred and sixty pieces of game, what with fowl and "grand chase" (venison), one hundred and sixty-two platters of cakes and sweetmeats, the whole watered with torrents of hippocras and French wines. Strangely enough, he moved through Valence, the capital of his new domain, almost without stopping, on the excuse that he had to receive the investiture from the King in person. He likewise declined to accept the Collar of Saint Michael which was offered him by an emissary from the French Court, arguing that he could accept such a decoration only from the hands of Louis himself.

The meeting with the Monarch finally took place at Chinon, and Cesare's display was so brilliant that Brantôme saw fit to speak of it in his "Lives of Men Illustrious," lauding the Pope's

scion in a tone proper to a courtier but with a note of scoffing that vented French envy and spleen. In comparison with this Papal prince who came from Italy bringing all the modern refinements of the Italian Renaissance, the French gentry felt themselves crude and rustic. The military spirit was still uppermost in those knights of France. They were still most proud of their achievements in the field. They found this young Italian rather effeminate. He was dressed in silks and velvets at all hours, like a lady, and sported weapons inlaid with gold and priceless stones, as though they were toys. He left traces of perfume in the air as he walked by, and was followed everywhere by troupes of servants, who tossed handfuls of coins to the crowds. One of Borgia's niceties was to have his chargers shod with silver shoes fastened with silver nails. These would shortly break; the shoes would come off, and be picked up by lucky spectators.

Charlotte of Naples, daughter to King Frederick, was finishing her education at the French Court and was on hand to meet her "parson" suitor. But Louis' efforts to arrange a match proved ineffectual. Charlotte was in love with a gentleman from Brittany, and Frederick, the father, said that he could not possibly sacrifice the affection of his daughter to political ends. This attachment on Charlotte's part may have been devised as a pretext to be rid of Cesare. The latter, however, seems to have forced his suit, either out of infatuation for the lady or as a matter of pride. A match with Charlotte could have brought him no particular diplomatic advantages, once Louis the Twelfth and Alexander the Sixth had agreed to a partition of the realm of Naples! But such double-dealing was not exceptional in the intrigues of that time. Those familiar with the terms of the secret compact were probably not at all surprised to see the King of France and two Borgias working for a marriage with the daughter of the man whom they were plotting shortly to ruin.

The one statesman of the time wily enough to penetrate any design no matter how well concealed was the King of Spain, who could always guess what he did not know and who, in fact, caught the whole intrigue between the Pope and the French King

at a glance. Ferdinand was moved to wrath that a Spaniard made over into a Pope should be venturing on a policy of his own which might in the end prove counter to Spanish policy. He was, moreover, a man of vigor, adept in plots and counter-plots. He could soon embroil any situation in such complexities that in the end he would be the only one capable of unravelling it.

In the present case he made a secret proposal to the King of France that they divide Naples among themselves if such partition proved desirable. At the same time he sent an embassy to Rome to threaten Alexander and mayhap intimidate him. The Spanish envoys reached the Eternal City at a moment when the Pope was in an anxious situation. Cesare was being lavishly entertained at the French Court and had become Duke of Valence; but otherwise he was beginning to look ridiculous. Everyone knew that he had gone there to marry a royal princess; but that project was still a project. Finally, Louis the Twelfth ceased pestering Charlotte of Aragon, and tried to console the new Duke with another princess of the same name—Charlotte, of Albret, sister to the King of Navarre and likewise a ward at his Court. Cesare accepted the substitution willingly enough. The second Charlotte was a strong, vivacious, well-educated girl of attractive presence. She had besides been impressed by the handsome and fashionable prince from beyond the Alps whose sumptuous elegance was the talk of France. Her love for Cesare seemed to augur a happy marriage. The Albret family, however, especially Charlotte's father, divined the French King's embarrassment, and were disposed to exploit it, setting a high price on the hand of the young lady.

In view of all these intrigues, Alexander the Sixth was groping his way forward from day to day in great nervousness. But suddenly he found himself faced by grave dangers at home. The Colonnas had always been friends of the Borgias and enemies of the Orsinis. They now joined the latter to make common war upon the Church. Ascanio Sforza sensed that Alexander's alliance with Louis the Twelfth was a move against Milan. He straightway deserted Alexander to join Ferdinand the

Catholic and Maximilian of Austria, and began projecting with them the convocation of a Church Council which would expel Alexander from the Papal throne.

It was to deliver the threat of this convocation that Spanish envoys came to the Vatican toward the end of the year 1498. The interview between the Spanish Pope and the Ambassadors of the Spanish King proved a stormy one. The envoys began by alluding to illegal means of which the Pope had availed himself in obtaining his election; but Alexander interrupted sharply:

"I hold my Pontificate more rightfully than the Spanish sovereigns their realm, of which they are possessed without legal title and in defiance of all justice, since their domains belong to other members of their families who had sounder claims upon the crown. Your King and your Queen are only usurpers, as I know better than anyone else, since it was I who helped them and supported them when they were young, favors for which mayhap I am repentant now."

All the negotiations were conducted in this tone, the Pope angrily repelling the insinuations made against him, especially the charge that he was going too far in looking after the interests of his children. When the Spanish legates alluded to the death of the Duke of Gandia and suggested it might be a divine punishment, the Pope rejoined:

"But a sterner castigation from On High has been that laid upon your sovereigns who have not been blessed with male descent. That indeed I deem retribution for the repeated invasions don Fernando has permitted himself upon the rights of the Church in satisfaction of his personal ambitions."

The envoys did not once advert to illegitimate children of the Pope's, doubtless because His Most Catholic Highness had four bastards whom he had recognized, and many others whom he had not chosen to acknowledge. Few the magnates of that era who could boast impeccable domestic morals and offspring legitimate throughout! Kings, Popes, and prelates were all parents beyond the boundaries set by social convention and ecclesiastical law.

So the parleys were finally broken off; and the sometime Legate to Spain, who had known Ferdinand and Isabel as princes in misfortune and who had legitimatized their irregular marriage, sustained them with his influence, and finally honored them with the title of "Catholic Sovereigns," would now say whenever their names came up:

"They are the worst pair of rascals I have known in my whole life!"

And the Pope was perhaps right in thinking them ungrateful. He had always given more than he received; and it was an abuse on Ferdinand's part to utilize Alexander's Spanish birth as a means of bending the spiritual and political power of the Papacy to the purposes of Spanish diplomacy. Louis the Twelfth eased Alexander's mind by informing him that Ferdinand was making secret advances to France, while striving to frighten the Pope with threats of deposition as an ally of that country. Talk of a possible deposition of the Pope was nevertheless so general about Europe during the year 1498 that Christopher Columbus, in establishing a primogeniture for the inheritance of his imaginary wealth, provided that his eldest son, Diego, should stand by Alexander, in case schism in the Church deprived that Pontiff of his office and his temporal possessions.

The atmosphere suddenly cleared for Alexander on the twelfth of May, 1499, when a messenger came in from Louis the Twelfth announcing the celebration and consummation of his son's marriage with Charlotte d'Albret. Cesare was twenty-three years old at the time. In thus reaching the goal which he had set out for France to obtain, in the face of opposition from the principal States of Italy, he had shown himself the equal of many diplomats who considered themselves past masters in the art of intrigue, and especially of the King of Spain and the Emperor of Austria, two of the slyest foxes then living the world.

The day after his wedding the Duke of Valence dispatched a private messenger to the Holy City at breakneck speed, to deliver a letter into the Pope's hands.

The letter consisted of one word, spelled in a single symbol: the number 8.

This magic number was the occasion of a week's laughter in Rome. Not only was it an indirect report of Cesare's diplomatic triumph: it was the crude and laconic enumeration of his matrimonial victories. The young Borgia was proudly reassuring the head of his family that the line was not likely to die out, that, shortly, in fulfillment of an ambition dating from Calixtus the Third, a Borgia would be available for a throne in Italy! Soon Charlotte herself wrote a letter to the Pontiff testifying to an enthusiasm just as great for the assiduities of her husband.

But, as Claudio sadly reflected, the marriage which began under such favorable auspices was to bring little but disappointment. For four months, from May to September of the year 1499, Cesare and Charlotte were able to live together in an idyllic retreat. No one was concerned with them, and they for their part seemed disposed to live apart from history. Then suddenly Cesare had to leave his wife and hurry to Rome to begin a campaign against the Italian barons who were seizing the properties of the Holy See. The physical condition of the Duchess did not allow her to accompany her husband: she gave birth to a child in the first months of the year 1500—a girl who received the name of Louise.

Louise was never to see her father nor was Charlotte ever to meet her husband again. Cesare rushed from her side to meet the great glory and the final tragedy of his life. He was to show in three campaigns that the former Cardinal of Valencia was one of the great captains of history. He was then to die as an obscure soldier, unknown to the men who slew him.

Over two years' time Charlotte kept trying to get to Italy to see her husband and show her daughter to him. She wrote many letters to her father-in-law, the Pontiff, in that hope. But the Papal army was always marching and counter-marching. There was no telling where Cesare would ever be. At no time during that period did it seem safe for her to attempt the journey.

Those four months of silent happiness were never to be re-

peated, though the memory of them was to stay with Charlotte for the rest of her life and incline her in the end to permanent widowhood. After her husband's death she refused all other matches, preferring to remain true to the union which had brought her brief but unsurpassable joy. She was to die at the age of thirty, after applying herself wholly to rearing and educating Louise. Cesare's daughter in her time was to marry twice, first the Prince of Talmond, who fell at the Battle of Pavia; and then a prince of the House of Bourbon.

CHAPTER III

The Stratagem of Sinigaglia

As he thought of his distant forebears, Claudio likened the various Borgias to various animals: Pope Alexander was the impetuous, blindly charging bull that runs the arena attacking everyone he sees, but finally succumbs to the strategy of the *matador*. The diplomats of that era, among the wiliest and least scrupulous known to history, considered him a violent, hot-headed man, but for that reason inclined to go astray in his deeper-laid calculations. Cesare, on the other hand, was the tiger of the golden skin, the emerald eyes and the cat-like grace, stretching menacingly and yawning, in preparation for the fray; or perhaps a bird of night, a bird of prey, clothed in his black plumage of Spanish silks and brocades, his eyes gleaming with fire against that background of darkness, the whole forced upon the attention, as it were, by the gorgeous white panache.

Of the two, the father was the more gentle, the more approachable; but Cesare surely was the more striking in appearance, the more brilliant in his sinister splendor. His ambition embraced the widest horizons, and his inordinate pride spared him any renunciations at the behest of love. Rodrigo Borgia was a weakling in the hands of women down to his ripest age. Cesare possessed them rather for the thrills of domination than out of love. He never was influenced by women; he kept them aloof from his affairs, using them for amusement, for pleasure, but otherwise despising them, like a master of some oriental harem. "Had he been a philanderer on his father's pattern," thought Claudio, "he could never have done what he did in the brief space of three years."

During his walks about Rome, Claudio's most frequent goals were the scenes where the last episodes in the lives of Cesare and

his father had unrolled—the "Rooms of the Borgias"; the gardens of the *Belvedere* where the famous banquets, *fiestas* and orgies were held in the open air; the Castle of Sant' Angelo which Cesare and Alexander refortified till it was impregnable to the weapons available at that time. His critical eye suppressing all that was modern, all that was of a later date, Claudio thought he could see the Vatican as it was in Alexander's day with its life of petty intrigues and petty wars, surrounded by the malicious, fickle, gossiping populace of Rome, which now cheered the triumphs of "Our Cæsar!", "the only Cæsar!" then accepted and spread abroad the most monstrous slanders about the Borgias.

Cesare's success in France created a veritable panic among the Pope's enemies, who had always looked suspiciously on the visit of the young Borgia to the court of Louis the Twelfth. On news of his homecoming, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, a weak and timid individual despite his love for complicated intrigues, took flight from Rome, but without daring to find refuge with his brother, Ludovico the Moor, in Milan, lest he give the impression of being in league with that ruler. The Cardinal's example was followed by Alfonso of Aragon, Lucretia's husband, who likewise took wing from the Vatican. Alfonso was nephew to the King of Naples; and since Duke Valentine had reason to be angry at that Monarch for the refusal of his daughter's hand, the young man was worried at the position he occupied in the bosom of the Borgia family. Though he was in no visible danger, he abandoned Rome and joined Cardinal Ascanio Sforza. Lucretia refused to follow him, though he begged her to do so. She regarded his fears as quite out of place. Thereupon her father named her regent of Spoleto, a city up to that time governed by Cardinal-Legates.

Surprising as this appointment may seem today, it could have made no such impression in its time. It was a question of a political post, involving no religious obligations. Many Italian fiefs were properties of women. As a matter of fact, Lucretia had a cool, clear head in dealing with public affairs, and, in this particular charge, won nothing but praise from her subjects.

Later on, her father was to entrust her with the government of Nepi; and when she married the Duke of Ferrara, she always administered that principality in the absence of her husband and showed the same political aptitudes that distinguished her father and her brother.

Eventually Lucretia managed to reassure her husband, and he returned to Rome on the occasion of the birth of their son. The boy received the name of his grandfather, Rodrigo, and was baptised with great pomp in the Sistine Chapel.

However, events were unfolding rapidly. The King of France had already appeared in Italy, arriving with Cesare Borgia. On the sixth of October he entered Milan. Ludovico the Moor offered no resistance, but fled, instead, to the Court of Maximilian of Austria. In Central Italy Cesare Borgia rapidly organized a mercenary force and began hostilities on his own account against the vassal barons of the Holy See who were refusing obedience, and whom Alexander had dismissed by proclamation from their domains.

Cesare was acting in conjunction with Louis of France and his forces, in addition to recruits raised by himself, were composed of mercenaries financed by that King.

The Duke was setting out on a campaign that was to be brilliant indeed. With Cesare Borgia and Gonzalo de Cordova the art of war, in its modern sense, may be said to have first appeared in Europe. His cavalry was a relatively small contingent of three hundred lances, commanded by Captain Ives d'Allègre, the man who had captured Julia Farnese and held her for ransom years before. The Bailiff of Dijon led a regiment of Swiss and Gascon guards in the pay of Louis of France. Borgia himself had hired the companies of the Italian free-booters Ghiberti and Bentivoglio. Finally, he could count on a force of Spaniards, which at times numbered as many as three thousand men, commanded by a Valencian nobleman, don Hugo de Moncava. (Moncava was destined in time to become one of the outstanding generals of the future Emperor Charles the Fifth, and to die as admiral in a naval battle.) This Spanish contingent was the

nucleus of Cesare's army during three years of continuous campaigning. The men who composed it were, for the most part, professional *bravos,* inclined, on the one hand, to heroism and, on the other, to crimes of violence and blood; men to be disciplined only by a captain like themselves, cruel yet generous, ready to kill a man for an act of disobedience, yet overlook an extravagance committed by a subordinate whether against property or against women. These dangerous ruffians came drifting in one by one to the standard of Valentino, now from Spain, at the resonance of Borgia's glory, now from the neighboring Kingdom of Naples as deserters from the ranks of Gonzalo de Cordova—at the moment the adventures of the son of the Pope seemed to offer better prospects of booty and glory.

Years later many of these Spanish mercenaries were to embark for the passage over the Ocean Sea and become explorers of the South American forests and even founders of great cities in the New World. Others were to fill out their careers in Europe, making war now in one country, now in another; as though the Old World, without distinction of languages and frontiers, were one endless field of battle for them. Some of their names are known to history. Here, first and foremost, was the notorious don Michelotto, commanding a company of Spanish cut-throats and bullies whom he had recruited from the gutters and dives of Rome. Here also was a certain Diego Garcia de Paredas, *alias* "the Samson of Extremadura," famous in anecdote for his great physical strength and his Spanish chivalry. In a church one day, he tore a holy-water font from its foundations, that a lady might dip her fingers in it with greater ease. On another occasion, he stopped a pair of oxen pulling against him, with one hand; on still a third, single-handed, he checked a hostile battalion charging along a road, and successfully covered the retreat of his own comrades. Another Spaniard, also from Extremadura, was one Gonzalo Pizarro, known in Trujillo, his native city, as "the Roman" because of his campaigns in Italy. Some years before he enrolled under the banner of the Borgias, Pizarro had loved and deserted a peasant girl of his native region, leaving

her with a child, one Francisco Pizarro, who became a swineherd, and never found time to learn how to read and write. Francisco Pizarro was to conquer the great Empire of Peru, on the distant shores of the Pacific, and govern the territories of the Incas as a veritable king.

The Italian contingent enlisted individuals of no less adventurous careers. Some of them were ignorant brutal men who had known little else but blood and struggle. Others were gentlemen of breeding, attracted to the war by love of excitement or by various misfortunes in their hazardous lives. Literary men with some training at arms, university students bored with their books and manuscripts, painters and sculptors who might have brained some colleague in a quarrel and were, for the moment, evading the agents of justice—all flocked to Valentino's standard. One of them was Torrigiano, a sculptor with a temper. Torrigiano had an argument one day with a fellow-pupil named Michelangelo (in the Church of the Carmine at Florence, where they were both studying). He settled it by punching Michelangelo on the nose, leaving him to bear the marks of the blow to his dying day.

All told, Cesare's army could not have exceeded ten thousand men, but he had abundant artillery. He had thoughtfully observed the tactics of Gonzalo de Cordova, when the latter was acting as advisor to the Duke of Gandia, and taken many hints which he was now to elaborate to perfection. Infantry and artillery were the real weapons of Cesare Borgia. His foot-soldiers were lightly armored and moved about with lightning speed unencumbered with baggage. Military tradition at the time relied on heavily armored cavalry moving in short, slow marches, with rests sometimes of years before a besieged stronghold. Cesare's strategy lay in the free manœuvre, the surprise attack, the rapid descent upon the enemy. His campaigns of marches and countermarches were to anticipate by three centuries the brilliant operations on Italian soil of another chieftain of equally youthful years, Napoleon Buonaparte.

He began his war by attacking the barons who were occupying

fiefs of the Church on the Adriatic slope of the Apennines, in the March of Ancona and the so-called Romagnas: the Manfredis of Faenza, the Riarios of Imola and Forlì, the Malatestas of Rimini, the Montefeltros of Urbino, and Giovanni Sforza at Pesaro.

The first operations resulted in easy victories, almost without bloodshed. The inhabitants of the towns opened their gates to the young conqueror and welcomed him in triumph. They had long been living under rapacious tyrannies—petty despots perpetually at war with one another and agreeing, if at all, only in abuse of commoner and peasant. To such people Cesare Borgia came as a liberator. They were aware of his reputation for generosity and chivalry. They were flattered at his unpretentious manners in dealing with them.

The wily Borgia was really looking to the future, holding before his eyes the vision of a single kingdom embracing all Italy, obedient to the Pope but actually ruled by sovereigns emanating from the Borgia family. Such a structure could not be reared in a day. It was good policy for him to caress the masses who would bear him on their backs in the long ride. It would be wiser to conserve his energies, instead of wasting them in futile bickerings with artisans and burghers, as most of the little Italian tyrants of the Renaissance were doing. Cesare had formulated a policy on such matters: "Hard on the mighty, light on the poor." And in pursuance of that maxim he even shed the blood of his associates when such measures seemed called for. On occasion he hanged or decapitated lieutenants ruling in his name for imitating the abuses of the barons they had replaced and inflicting injustices and extortions upon their peoples.

The *Romagnoli* and other mountaineers of the Apennines, muscular giants with a passion for athletic exercises, found this fashionable, well-dressed autocrat quite to their liking. He went about dressed in gorgeous silks and covered with jewels, like a lady; but such effeminacies were purely external; his fine face and elegant manners concealed a fighter, an athlete, a man of

courage. Popular festivals were held in the villages he conquered; and the multitudes could see the powerful Duke Valentine talking familiarly with shepherds or tillers of the soil, taking off his silken doublet and his silken shirt, till his body was naked from the waist up, and inviting the gentlemen in his company to do likewise; then wrestling shoulder to shoulder, arm to arm, with the lowliest of his subjects, so only they were men of his muscle, throwing them or being himself thrown, and then shaking hands with his adversaries afterwards, to the wild applause of the spectators.

Distances seemed not to exist for this indefatigable horseman, who would throw his troops upon Imola, for instance, and then gallop off to Rome for a visit to his father whom he had not seen for a year. He would stay two or three days, and then reappear in camp after an incredible ride, travelling in twenty-four hours roads that ordinarily required a journey of days.

The cities continued opening their gates without resistance, the populations rising against their former despots and hailing the Borgias. Most of the citadels remained untaken, however. The lords, or their lieutenants, would withdraw to such fastnesses, and there, for the most part, defy attack. That very thing happened to Forlì, capital of the celebrated Catarina Sforza, one of the most tragic figures of the Italian Renaissance. When her city surrendered unconditionally, Catarina took refuge in her citadel vowing she would die in its ruins.

This virago of undoubted heroism lived a life rich in misfortunes and crimes. Her sorrows won sympathy among her contemporaries because she was a woman; but, in truth, she was more of a savage than a tomboy, and outstripped all the tyrants of her era in brutality.

Catarina came from a line of despots. Her father, the one-time master of Milan, so abused his people that he was put to death by an enraged mob and his body torn to pieces. Most of her relatives, tyrants one and all, fell victims to well-deserved vendettas. She herself was a huge, powerful person, her one feminine charm being her hair, which she dyed blonde in the

fashion of the period. Violent in her amorous attachments, as in her methods of government, she had, at a very early age, married a man from the Riario clan, nephew to Sixtus the Fourth and cousin to Giuliano della Rovere. The atrocities of this Riario caused the inhabitants of Forlì to rise in revolt and murder him; and his body was thrown from a tower of the citadel. The lesson had no influence on Catarina Sforza. She became more cruel and arbitrary than ever. The lover she took after her husband's death was guilty of abuses just as great. A second rebellion brought him to the end that had overtaken Riario.

Left alone, Catarina took it upon herself to exact reprisals from her subjects. She entered Forlì on horseback at the head of her troops and put to the sword such inhabitants as fell into her hands, sparing neither women nor children. Finally, the burghers crowded her into her stronghold and laid siege to the towers. The rebels had managed to gain possession of Catarina's children and informed her that the little ones would be put to death unless she surrendered. The bold Amazon made answer in tune with her character. She appeared on one of the ramparts of her castle, raised her skirts to her waist and made a gesture toward her womb. They could kill her children if they wished! She had the wherewithal to provide others!

Holding Forlì and adjoining towns as widow of a Pope's nephew who had received them in fief, this courageous and barbaric Britomart was a worthy antagonist for Cesare Borgia. The Duke went so far as to advance without his armor to the very foot of the castle walls, to beg Catarina to capitulate and avoid the consequences of a desperate struggle. The woman, undaunted, refused to parley. On the twelfth of January, in the year 1500, Valentino's guns opened a breach in the outer wall of the castle and his soldiers occupied the first enclosure. Catarina took refuge in the great central tower, called the "Bulldog." Something went wrong with a mine she had laid against the besiegers, and a premature explosion caused more execution among her own soldiers than among the enemy. Borgia was soon master of the whole fortress.

The Duke treated Catarina, now his prisoner, with all the honor due her rank, awaiting a favorable opportunity to dispatch her to Rome, where it was planned to bring her to trial for an attempt to poison the Pope. The pamphleteers in Venice, who took every opportunity to slander the Borgias, duly recorded in their chronicles that Duke Valentine did not confine his assaults to Catarina's citadel, but ventured others upon her person. Similar insinuations were made against Alexander the Sixth, who held her captive in comfortable lodgings in the *Belvedere* at the Vatican. The story was palpably absurd. Cesare Borgia was a man of fastidious tastes in everything touching his relations with women. He could not have been greatly attracted by this ungainly virago, admirable enough as a fighter and a slaughterer, but less than desirable as a woman. As for the allegations against the Pope, he was at that particular time more than ever under the influence of *la bella Giulia.* On the other hand, there is positive evidence of Alexander's kindness and disposition to forgive. He held proof that Catarina Sforza had plotted his death by poison, and he had escaped by merest chance. He might have had her condemned to death in legal form after trial before a court; or, following the procedure of other sovereigns ruling in his day, he might have had her quietly strangled while she was living as his prisoner in the Castle of Sant' Angelo or in the commodious palace of the *Belvedere.* Instead, he yielded to the promptings of a jovial nature incapable of enduring hatreds and coldly premeditated acts of vengeance. Judging her harmless, he allowed her to withdraw to a convent in Florence, whence she issued to become the wife of Giovanni de' Medici. To this husband she bore a son who was to become the famous freebooter, Giovanni *dalle Bande Nere.*

Cesare left one of his personal friends (a Spaniard, don Ramiro de Lorca), as governor at Forlì, and was planning to continue his campaign into the territories of Pesaro and adjoining States, when Louis the Twelfth, at the urging of Trivulzio, his representative at Milan, momentarily withdrew the French contingents in Valentino's army. This obliged Borgia to halt his

advance and return to Rome, after occupying a number of strongholds of minor importance. All Italy was convinced that the Church had at last found a great Captain of her own, capable of defending her actual possessions and recovering those she had lost. Alexander and Cesare were moved by personal ambitions, but it was none the less true, as Machiavelli pointed out, that after the death of the two Borgias, the Holy See was to inherit the conquests they made.

"The Church," thought Claudio, "issued greater and stronger from the pontificate of Alexander the Sixth, and not with diminished prestige as had been the case under previous Popes. The vindictive Rovere who, as Julius the Second, so bitterly persecuted the memory of his rival of former days, enjoyed the peace and the good order re-established by the Borgias in the pontifical States. The Church had annexed Romagna and other provinces; her vassal barons had been soundly chastised and rendered innocuous as regards future disobedience. Pope della Rovere reaped where others had sown."

Cesare's re-entrance into Rome was patterned on celebrated triumphs of Antiquity. His father awaited his coming with an impatience he could not dissemble, weeping and laughing hysterically at the same time. He felt the pride of an infatuated parent in this boy, twenty-four years old, who, after outwitting the subtlest diplomats of Europe in France, had now shown himself an invincible warrior. New heavens were opening before the old man's eyes. He looked forward to a future of glory with a rapture as great as Cesare's. His life as a private individual with all its weaknesses and sins he regarded as something separate and apart from his functions as head of the Church. In this latter capacity he aspired to become one of the greatest Popes and worked disinterestedly for the prosperity of the Holy See. His waywardness as a man had no effect on the depth and sincerity of his religious faith.

At this moment Alexander was certain of God's approval and protection. A new world had been discovered under his pontificate. Now a great Captain had arisen in his family to the glory

of the Church. When he had put the little tyrants of Italy in their places and established order, prosperity, and political unity in that country for the first time in centuries, he would go on to greater things—the reconquest of Jerusalem and Constantinople perhaps, an aspiration of so many Popes, which had never been more than an idle dream. But he and his son, Cesare, would make it a reality!

The Sacred College, the Ambassadors, the Curia, the Roman nobility, all the notables among the citizens, marched forth with uncovered heads from the Gate of *Santa Maria del Popolo* to welcome the victorious captain. Cesare had inherited a genius for magnificence from his father. He showed himself in every sense worthy of the great demonstration. His Spanish and Italian infantry, as well as his squadron of knights, filed past in sumptuous attire and with an orderliness without precedent in the armies of that time. The wagons in the baggage train were covered with rich canvases marked with the escutcheon of the Borgias. The young hero himself, with his instinctive sense for holding the center of the stage by force of contrast, was attired with tasteful simplicity in a garment of black velvet and black satin. Around his neck hung the great necklace of the Order of Saint Michael, a gift from the King of France reserved for princes of royal blood. The sword at his side and the dagger in his belt were masterpieces of artistic workmanship. He advanced through the embannered streets, while cannon thundered and bells rang. Women showered him with flowers and threw him kisses and smiles. The mobs of spectators hailed him with vivas to "our Cæsar." Here was a great Captain, born in Rome, the son of a plain woman of the Trastevere! All true Romans thought Cesare's glory in part their own!

The cortège moved along the *Corso* to the Castle of Sant' Angelo and thence to the Papal palaces, where the Pontiff welcomed his son in the famous "Hall of the Parrot," ordinarily used for diplomatic interviews. The young soldier expressed his thanks for the reception in a short speech, finally bowing to kiss the Pope's feet according to the established ceremonial; but Alex-

ander rose, his eyes streaming, caught the boy in his arms and embraced him passionately.

The festivities proceeded. A similar pageant, representing the triumphs of Julius Cæsar, traversed the streets of the city. In the eyes of those Romans the glories of the two Cæsars were inextricably intertwined. Masquerades and balls continued without interruption for days. But, while the city was given over to noise and gaiety, the young hero was keeping to his apartments in the Vatican discussing poetry, history, the plastic arts, with the group of prelates, writers, painters and military men whom he had gathered about him.

It is from this period, in fact, that Cesare Borgia began to lead the strange, unusual, conspicuously secretive life that was to clothe his figure in an atmosphere of mystery and lend certain appearances of plausibility to the slanders of his enemies. He began to show a preference for not being seen by the public which was talking of him perpetually. He began turning night into day, transacting his business and holding his audiences in the hours just before dawn. If he rode about the city, it was in a mask and a costume of black designed to prevent recognition.

"There was another strange thing about Cesare Borgia," Claudio remembered. "As a general he was famous for the speed of his marches and his endurance in the saddle. He was fond also of violent physical exercise, especially enjoying wrestling matches with men of all classes stronger and heavier than he. And yet in the privacy of his apartments he was rarely, if ever, to be seen using a chair. He would lie for whole days stretched out full length on a divan. In that posture he did his reading or listened to readings by his secretary, wrote his short, terse letters, ate his meals, or played chess with his intimates. During all the last years of his life, when Cesare Borgia was not in the saddle, he was lying on his back! All his traits show exaggerated and violent contrasts. He could gallop for days at breakneck speed, killing horse after horse under him; yet he was also capable of idling a whole week, like a Mussulman in a harem, without so much as lifting a finger!"

When the Pope awarded him the Golden Rose, a distinction reserved for the most part for kings, but which the College of Cardinals voted him unanimously in recognition of his services to the Church, he made another appearance in public, passing without effort from his oriental sluggishness to the most dangerous activity. On that occasion an arena for a bullfight was improvised behind the Basilica of Saint Peter. It attracted everyone in Rome. The young hero entered the arena for this entertainment with head and face uncovered, and dressed in a plain, black costume. He fought on foot, killing five bulls with a heavy sword, using his cape as a flag. On the last bull he used a stroke which he had devised and practiced himself. It was delivered between two vertebrae of the animal's spine, and so deftly that the whole breast was neatly pierced. The audience clapped wildly at this demonstration of skill, unable to see how a slender youth of such delicate features could strike with so devastating a force. Ambassadors, even of States hostile to the Papal family, wrote to their governments in astonishment at the strength and courage of the young Borgia, and noting the wild enthusiasm of the Romans for him.

However, the Borgias were soon to feel the consequences of their military triumphs in the form of anonymous slanders and denunciations. It was as though Alexander and his son had stumbled on a great wasps' nest and could not protect themselves from the angry swarm! A Spanish Pope, daring to do a thing that none of the Pontiffs born in Italy had ever been able to do! He had re-established the authority of the Holy See, which had been ignored for centuries by the barons who held lands of the Church! And now a young Roman, half Spanish by birth, was threatening to make an end of all of them, and march on, thence, to Florence, and even to the territories held by Venice on the mainland, to fuse them all into one great Italian kingdom! Here was more than enough for the gentry big and little, and for the commercial republics as well as for the feudal princes, to rise in their wrath against the foreigner triumphant in Rome! A flood of defaming pamphlets—all beginning with a "we have

heard," a "people say," or an "it is rumored"—was let loose upon the Borgias. Ferocious epigrams, and the most absurd tales, were devised and circulated, gaining ready acceptance among the multitudes, which are ever ready to believe everything to the discredit of the powerful.

Few people had any interest in defending the Pontiff and his son. Numerous, on the other hand, were those who believed it would be better if they were both out of the way. The Borgias could supply a livelihood only to a limited number of writers actually living in Rome. The others had the whole of Italy at their disposal for writing against the victorious family. Even the Spaniards settled in Rome contributed their share to this disloyal campaign of defamation. The Borgias could not provide for all of them, and the unsuccessful vented their disappointment and spite by repeating the gossip of the Italian romancers, and even improving upon it. One such was Captain Fernandez Orviedo, who years later was to be the first historian of the New World. Orviedo picked up in Rome the most absurd inventions against Alexander and Cesare. Their crime really was that they had never found work for him. In Naples, King Frederick anticipated a possible attack from the French and Cesare Borgia by giving free rein to his writers and historians in their assaults on the Pope's family. The King of Spain was likewise hostile—Ferdinand could not forgive a Spaniard for daring to flout his authority—and approved and fomented slanders. Venice was a hotbed of anti-Borgian propaganda. In Florence the Councillors of State instructed Machiavelli that Cesare Borgia had to be prevented from continuing his campaigns "at whatever cost," a phrase which, in the language then in vogue, meant that he should be assassinated.

Two events now occurred within the limits of the Vatican to hold the attention of the people of Rome for some time. In June of the year 1500 a storm blew down the great chimney of the Papal palace. The falling debris crashed through the roof of the hall where Alexander the Sixth was holding an audience. Several individuals in the company gathered about the Pontiff were

killed, and he himself escaped only because a huge beam, in falling, caught in the ruins in such a position as to form a shelter over his head and protect him from the rain of masonry which would surely have killed him. The Pope, then a man some seventy years old, could not have deported himself with greater tranquillity. He spurned physicians for treating the bruises he had received and would accept attention only from his daughter, Lucretia. He showed no trace of fear; rather he interpreted the catastrophe and his own escape as a sign that God was watching over his life that he might carry out his plans for the greatness of the Papacy.

The Romans were still talking of this miracle which God had wrought to save the Pope, when a startling crime threw all Rome into excitement. Alfonso de Aragon, Duke of Bisceglia and Lucretia's second husband, was stabbed at eleven o'clock one night on the stairway of Saint Peter's, while he was on his way to his wife's apartments in the Vatican. The assailants, a group of masked men, thought they had done him to death and hastily made their escape, escorted by a number of armed knights to one of the gates of Rome. Alfonso, however, had received serious cuts only on his scalp and arms. He dragged himself to the Pope's rooms calling for help. Lucretia fainted on recognizing his voice.

While Sancha and Lucretia applied themselves to the Duke's care, the Pope issued a proclamation forbidding the bearing of arms within the so-called Leonine City, that is to say within the immediate neighborhood of the Vatican. He, furthermore, placed sentinels at the door of the invalid's bedroom, though the latter's wife and sister were at his side at all hours. This conduct on Alexander's part seemed to betray a fear that the attack might be repeated by someone whom he would not care to punish.

Lucretia's husband was more in sympathy with his uncle, the King of Naples, than with the Borgia family; and the Neapolitan sovereign regarded a chance that Cesare might be killed as something devoutly to be hoped for. Valentino was undoubtedly Frederick's enemy and was waiting only for Louis' advance

against Naples to join the French cause. Borgia, for his part, still smarting under the contempt with which Frederick had rejected his proposal for Charlotte's hand, was urging Louis to occupy Naples at the earliest moment. Holding his own interests in mind, he thought he might garner from the plunder a neat section of Italian territory to embellish that future unified Kingdom of Italy of which he would be ruler some day.

Public opinion did not hesitate to recognize Valentino's finger in the attempted assassination of the Duke of Bisceglia, nor was he himself at any pains to conceal his hatred for his brother-in-law.

"The propaganda hostile to the Borgias," thought Claudio, "talks only of the attack on the Neapolitan prince; it never stresses the charges made by Cesare that Bisceglia had twice plotted his death at the instance of the King of Naples—on one occasion hiring a skilled crossbowman to pick him off quietly with an arrow, at long range, while he was crossing an interior courtyard of the Vatican. We may take it for granted that Cesare's bodyguard, commanded by don Michelotto, got wind of these doings. Valentino was implacable in such cases, and he would have felt more than justified in 'killing before he was killed.' The whole affair, as conducted on both sides, would have been quite in the spirit of political life at that time. The necessity, the sanctity even, of the so-called 'crime of State' was admitted universally as above question. A prince saw nothing unethical in removing by dagger or poison anyone who chanced to be in his way. No sovereign, no important public figure, would ever have thought of sitting down at table till the food and drink had been tasted by one of the servants. Every Pope, King, Cardinal, Prince and General owned a little silver ship with sails unfurled, the hold of which was a coffer to be opened only by a key which he carried himself. The vessel contained a napkin, a plate, a knife, a spoon, and a supply of salt and spices. When a man received an invitation to a banquet, the ship, jealously guarded by a trusted servant, would be placed on the table in front of him at the moment when he took his seat. He would

then open the silver hold with his own hands and provide his own cover and his own seasoning. No host would have dared be insulted at such a precaution which helped to relieve him also of any feeling of responsibility. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for Cesare's change in his manner of living after his victories—his aloofness from crowds, his working at night, his habit always of travelling *incognito*—was his fear of the attempts on his life which were constantly being made by the feudal barons of the country. Not one of these could show clean hands. The story of every tyrant in Italy relates one or more assassinations provoked by considerations of private or public policy."

The manner of Bisceglia's eventual death is recounted in different ways by each of the pamphleteers and ambassadors hostile to the Borgias. Some say he died by poison, others that he was strangled. According to one story, the prince was in his bedroom at the time, well on the way to recovery from his wounds, and talking with his wife and sister.

A call came at the door.

"Who is it?" asked one of the women.

"The Devil!" answered a mocking voice outside, and the door gave way under violent shoving from a number of men.

The two ladies were thrown out of the room, while a short little man, who seemed to be the leader of the band—don Michelotto, presumably—dashed upon the Duke, who was lying in bed, and choked him to death.

The murder aroused no great protest. The Ambassadors, in reporting to their governments, gave it no special stress in their dispatches. It was thought of as "a crime of State," to be taken as a matter of course. They were even disposed to minimize its importance in their very hatred of young Borgia, as though loath to credit him with too ingenious an achievement.

"The savagery of such doings," thought Claudio, "is terrifying to us moderns, because we think and feel in very different ways today. We have lost the art of dying. We have come to love life and to tolerate all the cowardices and compromises that such weakness implies. These men of the Renaissance knew that they

would die young. If they loved life, it was because they also despised it."

Lucretia showed herself overwhelmed at the death of the man who was the father of her only child. She retired to Nepi and lay ill there for a time. But in three or four months she was back in Rome figuring as always in the gaieties of the Papal court, apparently quite reconciled to widowhood. She too was a woman of her time able to understand many things that are less comprehensible to us. Cesare probably had little difficulty in convincing her that he had acted in self-defense, and that Bisceglia had well deserved the punishment which he had inflicted upon him. The same "reason of State," which compelled her to accept this misfortune was shortly to compel her to accept a third marriage—the most brilliant indeed of the lot! She was to become the wife of Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, owner of one of the richest principalities in Italy.

By this time Louis the Twelfth had completed his preparations for the invasion of Naples and was able to dispense with the troops which he had withdrawn from Valentino's army on the eve of the latter's advance on Pesaro. Cesare was therefore able to begin his second campaign.

This adventure too was favored by the burghers of the various towns of the Papal States, who were anxious to be rid of their tyrants. The populations of Rimini and Pesaro hailed Valentino as their savior from oppression and ruin, and rose in tumult against their lords the moment the Papal army drew near. Lucretia's first husband, the implacable slanderer of the Borgias, fled from his capital in terror, knowing well that Cesare had sworn to kill him with his own hands. The only city to offer stiff resistance was Faienza, where the townsmen cherished a sincere affection for their sovereign, Astor Manfredi, a boy still in his 'teens, who was regarded as the handsomest young man of his time. Manfredi was as noted for his chivalry and high-mindedness as for his good looks. He had always treated his subjects with kindness. Cesare doffed his hat before the heroism of this gallant adversary and fought him with all the considera-

tions of chivalry. On days of truce the two commanders met on friendly terms, while their respective armies fraternized. These campaigns of Alexander's son were indeed conducted like works of art. Carnival came on while Valentino was besieging one of the towns of Romagna. Not only did Cesare allow his army to enter into the spirit of the holiday season, but he sent a baggage train of masks and costumes into the town that the garrison might have facilities for enjoyment too.

His military Court abounded in painters, sculptors, and literary men. His secretary was the famous Humanist, Agapito de Amalia; and various poets graced his headquarters with their presence, among them the celebrated extemporizer, Serafino d'Aquila. General engineer, chief sapper and fortress builder of his army was no less than Leonardo da Vinci, a man as yet unknown in Italy. Such employment on the part of the future author of *la Gioconda* was not surprising in an era when great men showed the most versatile aptitudes. Awaiting his immortality as a painter, Leonardo da Vinci was content to work for Duke Valentine, designing fortresses, bridges, aqueducts, roads, breakwaters, naval basins, or devising new instruments of warfare. Such varied talents and practices were not unknown in other artists of the time, though none of them was to attain such great distinction as Leonardo in so many fields. A man of adventurous life, eager to fight his way to fame through general indifference, with no interest whatever in women to distract him either with turbid passions or family cares, Leonardo succumbed to the fascination of the glorious captain who had appeared like a luminous meteor in the skies of political Italy. Not being a man of the sword, Leonardo gave what he had to offer—the best of his thought as engineer and master mechanic, and a new invention every Monday morning!

"The artist of the early Renaissance," thought Claudio, "was situated quite differently from his successor today. Painters and sculptors thought of themselves as plain workmen and organized in guilds as other manual laborers did. They had no aspirations beyond the horizons of their little world. They had amusements

of their own and were inclined rather than not to shrink from invitations to the palaces of their lords, where they felt embarrassed and bewildered in an environment so much higher than their own. One of the guilds in Florence, called 'the Trowel,' had a rule that its members must each attend the union banquet bringing a dish different from the food provided by others. Amusing fines and penalties were imposed on a member who turned out to have supplies already provided by one of his seniors in the guild ranking. Republics and principalities employed artists destined to future fame, in work connected with military operations. Sculptors, distinguished as *magistri artium,* built fortresses or hewed the stone cannon-balls used in the bombards. Painters were set to any task where designing was essential and often they received greater recompense for a sketch of a new battering-ram than for some immortal portrait of the Virgin. Artists attended to things which required study, invention, or skilled superintendence; and their pay was now a roll of cloth to make garments for their wives and children, or now cloaks in brilliant colors for themselves. 'They are stupid people, knowing nothing but their trades.' Such the comment of a Bishop of the period! Few, for that matter, were specialists. They could all turn a trick at anything. In this respect Leonardo was the archetype of such reservoirs of genius. Oftentimes, they would rise from the artisan world and become contractors and speculators in public works. Michelangelo wasted seven months of his life managing a quarry at Luni, where he worked, wrangling with stone-cutters and teamsters, at tasks which any gang foreman could have performed just as well. He was so annoyed during those seven months of 'bossing' that at one moment he thought of sculpturing the whole mountain as though it were one block of stone, and turning it into a gigantic statue."

Contact with Humanists did much to educate these artist-laborers and raise them in public esteem. They became less uncouth in their manners and the days passed when a Torrigiani could be admired for flattening the nose of a Michelangelo. And since the Humanists set the fashion in those days, the secular

barons and the magnates of the Church began to imitate literary men in their deference toward artists. It was the literary man who drew the plastic arts from their humility and endowed the painter and sculptor with the position they hold in life today.

Cesare Borgia hardly had time to become a true patron of the arts. His real life was but three years long and he spent those years as a warrior in the field, concerning himself with intellectual pursuits only in the brief periods of rest between his campaigns. Nevertheless, his generosity toward artists and men of letters became proverbial and gave rise to the phrase "Cæsarean liberality." During his career in the Sacred College, he devoted the entire income of the Archbishopric of Valencia, one of the richest in the Church, to the support of writers, sculptors and engravers. He did not come to know all the artists of his period, but he did something for three of the most famous: Pinturicchio, the master so much admired later on by Raphael; Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo.

A constellation of poets, some of them prodigious extemporizers, followed him everywhere and died young, as he died, to end stormy licentious lives. Some of them wrote Latin biographies of their patron, *"De gestis Cæsaris Borgiæ";* others intoned hymns to the bull, heraldic emblem of his great family—*Ad bovem Borgiæ;* or offered to the Duke of the Romagnas, the future creator of a united Italy, incense like the following:

"Salve Italum, O splendor dux illustrissime,
Cæsar, O Salve Cæsar, maxima fama ducum."

Ancient art was daily rising from the ruins of the Roman *campagna* as the ploughshare of the peasant turned up priceless marbles or struck the lid of some tomb with corpses dressed in golden garments and crumbling at contact with the air. Cesare loved to make gifts of such precious objects to the ladies of the Papal Court, many of whom were connoisseurs of classical antiquities. He was similarly lavish with jewels devised by his artist friends and protégés.

He became acquainted with Michelangelo in a most unusual

way. The great artist had come to Rome virtually unknown. But one day it chanced that Cardinal Riario, nephew to Pope Sixtus the Fourth, took the young Florentine to see his collection of classical marbles, and remarked in the course of the conversation that modern artists would never be able to produce work of the same quality. Michelangelo chanced to be looking at a Cupid, sleeping. It had a broken foot. He declared, in reply, that he himself had made that figure in Florence some years before and sent it to a dealer in Rome. The dealer had broken a foot off the little statue to make it look like an antique, then sold it to Cardinal Riario for two hundred ducats, paying the artist only thirty.

The Cardinal proceeded in the matter in a typically avaricious and unfair manner. He had bought the work as an antique and, though everyone accepted it as such, he demanded that the money be returned to him. It was at this juncture that Cesare Borgia intervened with one of his gestures as a *gran signore*. He bought the statue at its original price and kept it as his own for some years. Finally he sent it as a present to Isabella d'Este, who had begged him for it many times and averred she could never be able to have a good night's sleep until it belonged to her.

The episode brought great renown to the Florentine sculptor, and he attributed his fortune to Cesare Borgia. However, the two men met only on two or three occasions because of Cesare's constant absence in the field. Michelangelo had little taste for war and preferred not to follow his patron about from camp to camp as other artists were doing.

In the end Faienza fell. Valentino treated the heroic defender of the fortress in a most chivalrous manner, the two young men dining together and exchanging compliments as brothers-in-arms. Cesare had gained high esteem for the abilities of this youthful warrior and desired to have him among his Captains. Manfredi was left without fortune, on the loss of Faienza and of the lands that went with that fief. He gratefully accepted Borgia's proposal. In the suite of that victorious adventurer only a few years his senior, he might look forward to carving a new domain from

the lands Valentino would conquer! Had Borgia been thinking of murdering Manfredi, he would have had ample opportunity for doing so at the time of his triumph. As it was, Astor accompanied him to Rome and began to lead the gay career of a social lion in a city of licentious manners. He was already famous as the handsomest man in Italy. Women and artists, who had never seen him, knew that the young Lord of Faienza was a living replica of the purest Greek models that had come down from antiquity.

One morning the body of Astor Manfredi was found floating in the Tiber, his arms tied behind his back. As rumor had it, though there is nothing to confirm the charge, the corpse showed traces of the greatest insult a man can suffer. In the course of a day, the river yielded the bodies of two other young men and an unidentified woman. It was, one might say, the Tiber's habit to make these daily gifts to the city in witness of the tragic orgies of the night. Straightway Venice put forth the charge that Manfredi's death was the work of Duke Valentino, as though young Borgia were the only person in the depraved capital of the Pope capable of committing such a crime.

It is difficult to find a motive on Cesare's part for suppressing the young Lord of Faienza. The latter, rather, would have proved very useful to him in winning the citizens of Faienza over to voluntary acceptance of the new regime—Manfredi was popular with his father's subjects. If Cesare were at fault, the fault lay in permitting the young nobleman to accompany him to Rome for a taste of pleasure and a round of money-spending. He might have conditioned the liberty he had given his vanquished enemy by confining him to some other town. However, it was the fashion then to attribute every crime that occurred anywhere to Cesare Borgia, endowed for purposes of slander with a miraculous ubiquity. He was blamed, personally, for all excesses of the soldiers under his command, though these were neither better nor worse than other mercenaries of the period. It is known, for instance, that one of Borgia's captains, Diego Ramirez, eloped with the beautiful Dorothea Caracciolo,

wife of a military commander in the service of the Venetian Republic. Nevertheless, Cesare Borgia was personally accused of the abduction, though the pretty Dorothea and the Spanish Captain had disappeared in company and their affair had been a matter of common knowledge for some time. On another occasion, on the advance against Naples, Borgia's troops entered Capua. His Italian mercenaries carried off forty women with the idea of exacting ransom for them, as was a common procedure in the wars of the day, and as the French had done with ladies of the Papal Court. Immediately the gazetteers of Venice and Florence proclaimed from one end of Italy to the other that, in sacking Capua, Duke Valentino had reserved forty captive beauties for his particular harem. The dashing French Captain, Ives d'Allègre, poked fun at such stories about his comrade in arms:

"The Duke has never known famine as regards women. His trouble is to keep away from them, since they are always at his heels. He has never yet been called upon to take them by force."

It was impossible to conduct a campaign in those days unless the chance of sacking a city, with all the attendant consequences, were held out to the mercenaries as a reward.

After taking Capua, on the road to Naples, Cesare had to halt to reduce Piombino, a fortress with which his lieutenants had been dealing unsuccessfully. It was there that a famous Florentine joined his wandering court. The Republic of Florence, properly alarmed at Cesare's progress, sent Niccolò Machiavelli, the shrewdest of its diplomats, to follow Borgia's movements, and divine, if possible, his intentions. Valentino, on his part, as shrewd a diplomat as Machiavelli, guessed the exact nature of the Florentine's mission, and saw to it that he got only such information as was proper for him to have. In any event, Machiavelli became convinced that this twenty-four-year-old conqueror would finish by subjugating Florence and the other Italian States and create a unified and compact Italy under the protection of the Popes.

Lucretia, meantime, had been married by proxy to Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, and was slowly journeying toward her husband's domain attended by a majestic cortège. During the ball at the Vatican held in celebration of the wedding, a male dancer appeared, dressed in a sumptuous costume of black silk with a mask of the same color. The lone figure began gliding about the floor with a grace and skill that attracted every eye. Soon all the other dancers withdrew to the sides of the hall and stood looking on in admiring silence. But a name began passing from mouth to mouth:

"Our Cæsar! The only Cæsar! It can be no one else!"

Valentino, indeed, had left his camp and galloped to Rome by one of those uninterrupted rides which caused his presence to be reported in places leagues apart at the same time. He danced a few moments in honor of his sister's wedding and then disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

On Lucretia's departure for the North, Alexander set out by sea for Piombino to inspect this latest conquest of his son, and the harbor and walls which were being repaired by Leonardo. An atmosphere of sadness shrouded the Pope's farewell to his daughter. It was as though he felt he would never see her again. After celebrating the victory at Piombino with numerous festivities and conversing at length with Leonardo, whose expertness in any number of subjects he had divined, the Pope set out for home. His fleet was overtaken off the coast of Tuscany by a storm as dreadful as the one that had blown him ashore on the French Riviera, on his return from his journey to Spain as Papal Nuncio. Cesare and the bravest soldiers in his following experienced, despite their hardiness, all the terrors that such a tempest can inspire in men strangers to the perils of the deep. Even the experienced mariners in the crew gave themselves up for lost. The Pontiff, however, was the Rodrigo Borgia of old. Throughout the storm he preserved a smiling calm which the sailors regarded as a sort of miracle.

Valentino hurried to Milan for a conference with Louis the Twelfth of France, who gave him many public manifestations of

affection; and then he resumed his war against the Italian barons. One of the *condottieri* in his service, Vitellozzo-Vitelli, opened hostilities against the Florentine Republic ostensibly on his own account, though he was really working under orders from his chief; and suddenly Cesare had reason to observe how shaky was the ground under his feet.

His real strength had been an army organized in accord with a new idea: the speed of infantry manœuvres and the destructive power of perfected artillery. His forces were, nevertheless, a motley crew. There were too many ambitious free-booters among the men attracted by the promising fortunes of the young leader. Cesare, in the last resort, could depend only on the two or three thousand Spaniards enlisted under his own standards. His principal Italian lieutenants had always made their livings on the field of battle and based their future hopes on prospects of private conquest. They now began to perceive that in going forward from victory to victory, as he had been doing, Borgia would in the end devour them all, since his personal prestige was gradually surpassing the influence of the old feudal families. Besides, they were beginning to think the moment had come for them to start working on their own account, retaining for themselves the towns they conquered and, if necessary, getting rid of their chief. In September of the year 1502, the leading Captain in the army of Duke Valentino (Borgia was now being more commonly called "Duke of the Romagnas"), came to a secret agreement for provoking a general mutiny of the troops. The prime movers in the conspiracy were Vitellozzo-Vitelli and Bentivoglio, Lord of Bologna. They took oath of fidelity together and swore with the other generals to desert their chief and destroy him if possible. The forces commanded by the conspirators embraced the vastly larger part of Cesare's army. His defeat and death seemed certainties beyond question.

But Cesare was not the man to allow such a change in the atmosphere about him to take place without observing it. It was the Duke of the Romagnas whom Machiavelli took as the model for his ideal prince. Not only did he divine the intentions of his

enemies; but he made careful plans to thwart them and inflict exemplary chastisement.

He had just taken Urbino, upsetting that Guidobaldo who had served as military tutor to the Duke of Gandia. Guidobaldo, a *condottiere* by profession, at once joined the conspiracy against young Borgia; and when the inhabitants of Urbino perceived that serious divisions were arising in the ranks of the *Gonfaloniere* of the Church, they rose against Borgia and expelled his Captains. At just this moment Pisa offered to surrender to Cesare in order to escape from the hated yoke of the Florentines; but Valentino did not dare accept that opportunity in the face of the defection of his lieutenants.

In reality the conspirators were afraid of going too far in their revolt against their former lord. Not altogether trusting each other they could not make up their minds to carry their breach of discipline to the extreme. Cesare's first move in the crisis was to begin secret parleys with various of his subordinates, with the idea of weakening the fabric of the conspiracy. Vitellozzo-Vitelli, Paolo Orsini and Oliverotto da Fermo were the three mutineers most influential and determined in the group. They presented Borgia with a list of demands, most insolent in tone, demanding his immediate acceptance of them and threatening open rebellion in case of refusal. The document was signed by all the allied *condottieri* and was delivered to Borgia at Imola by Paolo Orsini in person. The Duke of the Romagnas countered with a proposal of a conference with the accusing leaders; and finally the city of Sinigaglia, which had just been taken by one of Cesare's lieutenants, was designated as the place of the meeting. The castle in the town was still being held by a former governor, who declared he would surrender only to Cesare himself and invited Borgia to come to the city for the ceremonies of transfer.

Cesare set out from Cesena on the twenty-sixth of December. On the Christmas morning preceding, the town had awakened to find exposed in the public square a man's head spitted on a lance, and near by the decapitated body of don Ramiro de Lorca. De Lorca had been governing the Romagnas for some months

past. The execution of this powerful Spanish personage, so intimate with the Duke, remained a mystery. It may have been connected in some way with the conspiracy of the generals. Borgia himself hinted that he had made an example of the man for tyrannical abuses of power in his government of the conquered peoples.

Four days later, on the thirtieth, Cesare appeared at Sinigaglia accompanied by a handful of trusted Spaniards under command of don Michelotto. Never had he shown such audacity or such confidence in his star. He put himself deliberately into the hands of the traitors, apparently closing every avenue of escape behind him. In truth, the declaration of the governor of the town that he would open only to Cesare in person was a lure held out by the rebellious generals. They had secreted their troops in the neighborhood of the city so that the Duke would not become suspicious at their presence, planning, when he had passed the gates with the slender bodyguard under Michelotto, to advance upon the town in an enveloping movement and kill Cesare and the few Spaniards who would be there to protect him.

Borgia, on his side, had laid his counter to all these preparations. It was a duel in smiling dissimulation. As he well knew, the man who struck the first blow would come off victor.

"This descendant," Claudio reflected, "of knights of the Spanish Reconquest who had swept down from the North to recapture the Kingdom of Valencia from the Moors, was by nature a generous, frank, outspoken man. The Borjas at home had always distinguished themselves for their bravery and straightforwardness; but, transplanted to an Italian environment of the Sixteenth century, they had adapted themselves to it as a prime requisite for survival. Surrounded by treason and duplicity, by lying and double-dealing, trained to the play of dissimulation and perfidy that were the normal recourses of intrigue at the Roman Curia, they ended by excelling in this new kind of game, applying their unique intelligence and their iron will to the arts now imposed upon them. Born in Italy and bred in

the atmosphere of the Papal Court, Cesare Borgia turned out to be the shrewdest and deepest intriguer of his day."

The meeting took place just outside the walls of Sinigaglia—on the one side Cesare and his escort, on the other Vitelli, Orsini, and Oliverotto da Fermo. The powerful contingents of the three conspirators remained in hiding some distance from the town. The only supporters they had immediately at hand were a few Italian mercenaries who had come as bodyguard to Oliverotto.

The greetings between the Duke and his former lieutenants were smiling and cordial. The conspirators were sure that Borgia would grant all their demands, whether by persuasion or by force.

Don Michelotto led the way into the town, on pretext that the hostile governor still holding the citadel might be planning some treacherous ambush. The city was reached by way of a drawbridge. Once across it with his men Michelotto allowed Cesare and the three generals to pass; but then he interfered to prevent the crossing of Oliverotto's soldiers, pointing to the scantiness of lodgings within and requesting them to find accommodation in the houses outside the walls.

While Corella was executing this astute manœuvre, the Duke and his treacherous Captains rode on to the palace which had been assigned him as headquarters. At the door the three men tried to bid him farewell; but Cesare amiably overruled them and insisted that they accompany him inside to discuss the problem of occupying the citadel which had to be done that afternoon, by negotiation if possible, by force if necessary.

The three men followed. The Duke showed them to the drawing-room in the palace and left them there on the excuse that he needed to attend to a pressing physical necessity.

Some moments passed; then the door of the drawing-room opened. But the man who appeared in the doorway was not Duke Valentino! It was don Michelotto! The expression on his face at once betrayed to the three men the trap into which they had fallen. The little Spaniard stood glaring at them like a bulldog which does not wait to bark before he bites. Michelotto beckoned over his shoulder to the squad of Spaniards who were

following him. In an instant the three *condottieri* found themselves gagged and bound; and without waiting a moment, don Michelotto was off with his men to attend to Oliverotto's guard, which was scattered through the suburbs of the city. He took the Italians quite unawares, killed such of them as offered resistance and made the others prisoners.

Meantime, the army of conspirators was awaiting orders some miles away in the country; but though it was commanded by a nephew and a brother of two of the prisoners, it made haste to withdraw.

After these rapid and effective acts in the forenoon, the Duke of the Romagnas presented himself before the citadel and the surrender took place before sun-down as he had promised that morning.

A kind of summary trial took place that night in the Castle. Vitellozzo-Vitelli and Oliverotto da Fermo were strangled the following morning in the presence of don Michelotto—Cesare was a man of delicate sensibilities and did not like to witness executions he had ordered! The spectacle of death intrigued him only in the heat and fury of the battlefield. Such unpleasant jobs he left to that crude but thorough gentleman, don Michelotto. The third morsel, Paolo Orsini, Cesare decided to keep for more leisurely tasting in Rome, where the man could be confronted with other members of his family who had been conspiring against the life of the Pope, and perhaps induced to talk. In fact, a revolt was to break out in the capital the moment the news arrived that Cesare had been captured or killed at Sinigaglia. The news came, but it told of Cesare's unexpected triumph! Alexander the Sixth hastened to incarcerate all the Orsinis on whom he could lay his hands—a Cardinal, an Archbishop, a Prothonotary of the Curia, and many soldiers.

After this deft and devastating blow Valentino was free to complete his conquests, followed now by a trustworthy and compact army, the generals of which, healthily impressed by the lesson they had received, would be sure to venture no further questioning of their invincible chief's authority. In Rome another

trial took place, rapid to be sure, but regular and in due legal form, and Paolo and Francesco Orsini, whose leadership in the conspiracy was known to all, were executed.

The Borgias, whom legend accuses of so many assassinations and poisonings, were free at this moment to sweep the board clear of all the Orsinis, their worst enemies. Nevertheless, those members of the family who had been imprisoned in Rome were released unharmed. Cardinal Orsini chanced to die in prison during the trial of Paolo and Francesco; but even his relatives admitted that his death was due to natural causes connected with his advanced years and the great excitement he had just passed through. But this did not prevent the Ambassadors of Venice and Florence from insisting on the charge of poisoning, thereby revealing the bad faith of all those envoys to the Court of Rome. They hated the Borgias, and especially Cesare, for the family ambition to unify the Peninsula under Borgia rule.

Valentino's coup at Sinigaglia aroused admiring comment throughout Europe. The Duke informed the Courts of the Western World of the trial and execution of the conspirators, as well as of the measures that had been taken in Rome against the Orsini faction. Almost all the reigning sovereigns replied with messages of congratulation. Feats such as Cesare had performed were then regarded as excellent politics and legitimate military stratagem. What more brilliant than to fathom the treason of one's enemies and trick them to their undoing with a speedier and more skilful treachery! Machiavelli could not contain his admiration at the tragedy enacted at Sinigaglia. As a Florentine he feared the prince who was threatening the conquest of his city. As a political philosopher he could only admire the Duke who furnished such brilliant personification of all his ideas of statecraft. As the Florentine Secretary observed the calmness and boldness with which Valentino had lent himself to the enemies' game putting himself deliberately into their toils that he might surprise them the more thoroughly, he exclaimed with a disciple's fervor:

"What a neat trick! What a beautifully laid trap and how beautifully sprung!"

CHAPTER IV

Three Wise Men of Cologne

AND then suddenly Claudio seemed to lose all interest in the Borgias. Of the multiple faces of Rome only the modern, the Humbertian, the Emanuelian, seemed endurable to him—streets and avenues with modern buildings, hotels in American style and the life that went therewith—legations, embassies, society, the world he had frequented before his scandalous imprudence at the reception of Enciso de las Casas. Now he was leaving his villa early in the morning to escape the atmosphere of a dead, historic Past which seemed to drape the neighborhood of the Leonine City with an air of despondency.

Luncheon he was now regularly taking in a restaurant where he would be sure to meet friends and acquaintances who spoke his own language, painters and sculptors from Spain, secretaries and attachés from countries of the America which speaks Spanish (not Latin) and is improperly called Latin America. He found something refreshing in their jovial, up-to-the-minute talk, far removed from the dusty antiquarianism which had tied him to solitude for so many days in the lonely studio of an English artist.

Yet one impression still remained with him from that protracted excursion into history: the thought of Valentino's vigorous impetuousness, the promptness with which he disposed of his enemies, his well-mannered and amiable contempt for women, inspired by the consciousness that they all desired him. And as he followed this thought, he smiled with the smile he imagined Valentino must have worn in weaving the bloody stratagem at Sinigaglia. Might not he, the last of the Borgias, possess some remnant of the sinister and redoubtable genius of his forebear? What a pity these degenerate modern times did not admit of

such profound disparagement of one's own life and other people's lives! He was aware of a vague impulse within him to do something, he did not know just what—something, perhaps, in connection with that Rosaura de Pineda whom his café companions were forever discussing, as if they had forgotten or had never known that he had been living with her just a year before! They talked of Urdaneta, the Doctor-General, as though he, Claudio Borja, had never figured in the beautiful widow's history; and the oversight angered him. Was he such an insignificant person after all?

There was something even worse. All those young men were envying the good fortune of one, Lopez Rallo, a youthful South American attaché, who, in the jargon of the society columns, was being "often seen in company" with the beautiful Argentinian. Rallo . . . who was Rallo? He did not know the fellow personally, but he could imagine him more or less, from what he knew of attachés in general, and from what he had heard of the young man in the gossip about Enciso's parlors. Some said Rallo was a handsome youth of distinguished manners, who, among other things, dressed in the height of fashion and was irresistible to the fair sex. Others denied him any remarkable qualities at all. A Spanish sculptor, who sometimes switched from art to gossip, denied that Rallo could ever be of the slightest interest to anyone: "He's a shoddy sort of person, an oversmooth, oily individual pushing refinements of dress and manner to the point of foppishness. There is a certain exotic flavor about his personality, I grant you. He's one of those South Americans of mixed blood who are always boasting of aristocratic Spanish ancestry. Some day we'll see him coming out with a coat-of-arms on his cuff-buttons and visiting cards. The one thing I really admire in him is the way he wears his monocle."

As to this last accomplishment everyone was in agreement. Rallo had never been seen to remove the circlet of glass pressed into one of his eye-sockets, at any hour of the day or night. Claudio's friends thought the ornament helped to explain the popularity of the young man in the drawing-rooms about the

Italian capital; all the more since the dull, flat eye that gazed from behind it was of a different color from the other one. The evident blending of three different racial strains in Rallo's physical background—"white, black and Indian," as the sculptor said with feeling terseness—gave him a certain romantic fascination for women in Europe, however disadvantageous it may have proved for him in America. He was an excellent dancer besides. A slender figure, a pair of nimble legs, and an instinctive, almost primitive, sense of rhythm, made him sought after as a partner even in preference to the Argentines, past masters in the diversions of the tea-room. Self-possession, a rather superficial versatility, and above all persistence as a climber, had finally gained him admittance almost everywhere. Viewed with reticence at first, he would in the end be found tolerable.

"He's a man," the sculptor continued, "who is always stalking new connections . . . the kind of fellow who thinks he has done something when finally he is introduced to a Duke or a Prince. They say that in order to persuade the Pineda woman to marry him, he is constantly talking of his honor and his standing as though, for all of his monocle, he were some débutante of disputed virtue. I even believe he has told her his uncle is a minister accredited to the Holy See and that he, Rallo, cannot persist in any relation of concubinage without risking the family name."

And the restaurant was in an uproar of laughter at these alleged devices of Lopez Rallo to lead the rich widow to the altar as a means of consolidating his own social position.

Claudio knew this uncle of Rosaura's admirer, a gentleman also named Lopez Rallo, of whom Senator Bustamante spoke as the greatest diplomat-general theretofore produced by the America of Spanish speech. He had met the man at the Senator's house in Madrid, and on another occasion in Rome, at the Spanish Ambassador's. Señor Lopez Rallo, Sr., was, however, now spending most of his time in travelling. Failing health was keeping him for the most part to the celebrated bathing places and noted centers of invalidism in Germany and Switzer-

land. Bustamante always deplored the premature decline of his eminent colleague. Rallo's diplomatic silence, which had won him renown on the other side of the Atlantic, was now being broken during social calls by occasional monosyllables panted in halting breath with approving nods of the head. When he spoke, he spoke slowly and deliberately; and since many times the other diplomatic celebrity he was visiting on the social occasions mentioned was equally aged and equally halting of speech and thought, it happened that the conversation would sometimes languish till both celebrities were fast asleep; and they would sit there snoring at each other until some noise in the street or in an adjoining room would awaken them both with a start; whereupon they would resume their very deliberate conversation.

"He's a little faded now," don Aristides would admit, "but one must never forget his enormous achievements in the field of diplomacy."

As for the achievements, Claudio found that Lopez Rallo, Sr., had negotiated in Europe many treaties for copyright in behalf of his Republic. That country had no literature; and yet the treaties would undoubtedly serve to immortalize Rallo's name. Any index of diplomacy could be found well sprinkled with "Lopez Rallo Treaties"; and such agreements, repeated from one nation to another about the world, had come to fill several volumes printed on time-proof paper at the expense of the little nation he represented.

"And yet," one of Claudio's friends remarked one day, "the man is a thoroughly estimable person in spite of his mania for making treaties. After all these years of work he is as poor as he was at the beginning. His government has always paid him badly, and he gets along as an Ambassador thanks to the fortune brought him by his wife, a good-natured, much subdued, thoroughly Catholic lady, enamored of her husband's glory. His wife is keeping him here at his post at the Vatican. When she was younger she went the rounds of the secular Courts; but here she feels very close to the threshold of Heaven and doubtless imagines that when she dies, she will have a shorter trip to make.

As you see, Lopez Rallo, the younger, has no particular inheritance to look forward to. His only fortune is his 'style' and his unquestionable skill as a dancer. That explains his interest in Rosaura de Pineda. With her wealth . . . well . . . could he find a better windfall?"

Rallo had met the lady a few months before while on a visit to his uncle at one of the bathing places. Claudio thought he could imagine the story of their friendship, an affair like all affairs that spring up between the frivolous pleasure-seekers of society in our time: a chance introduction, a dance, another dance; in the end, a *rendezvous,* preceded by the usual titillations, the usual shrinkings and evasions.

To all this talk Claudio reacted in anger and surprise, like a lover suddenly discovering his mistress in infidelity. Vainly did his good sense protest against an indignation so illogical. It was he who had broken with Rosaura, deliberately, insistently disregarding the warnings she uttered as a woman of more experience in life than he, spurning the counsel she had given him that he remain. How had he ever been able to do such a thing? Of what use had he found his freedom? How had he ever come to drift apart from her, like a dismasted vessel wallowing without a rudder? Whereas Rosaura . . . logically enough! What could she have done except go her own way?

Yet that she had a right to go her own way was a thing Claudio could not admit. His vanity as a man could only repudiate the notion that Rosaura should forget him so completely. And now he was all aflame again at the memories of tender intimacies which he had kept secret even from himself, in a sort of inward bashfulness. No, Rosaura must still love him! Of that he could be sure! No one could understand what she had really meant to him, so great had his rapture been! Could a thing so great, so wonderful, have meant nothing to her? Could she possibly find any substitute able to erase him from her memory? The thought was absurd! Claudio could see himself still present, constantly present, in her secret heart. If she were pretending to ignore his existence, it was because she was

sacrificing herself out of pride! Let him suddenly appear before her and everything would be changed! The past would come to life again in her spirit! One loves with real passion only once in a lifetime, and that passion makes any slavery endurable, and clothes the most abject surrender with dignity!

This flare of jealousy in Claudio had something of the anger of pride. This woman had belonged to him! To think of her as the property of another kindled in him the wrath of a man defending a rightful possession. That was why he longed to have—just for an hour—the dagger of his ancestor, Cesare Borgia! How contemptible, how effeminate, this modern life with its cowardly restraints and compromises! It was the Italian Renaissance that knew the art of dealing with such situations! Then people recognized no laws but their own interests and desires! If they died young, they died satisfied! What more could one ask?

On two successive afternoons he found his feet carrying him toward the hotel in Rome where, as he had learned, Rosaura was staying. At that time of day he would be likely to meet her. The dancing was beginning. It was her hour. But on both occasions he had abandoned his idea, after repenting in shame at his own indecision.

But these two experiences had not relieved his inner torment. A third time he went to the hotel at the same hour, but instead of faltering in front of the entrance, he strode resolutely across the threshold and advanced toward the grill where the dancing was in progress.

However, he had arrived somewhat later than he had supposed. The company was already leaving. At the door of the grill he met a line of ladies coming out, gaily chatting as they sought their wraps and proceeded onward to waiting cars. The grill itself was almost deserted, and the music seemed louder in proportion as the conversation lessened, booming resonantly from ceiling and wall.

Halting near the door he swept the room with a searching glance; and the result surprised him!

There, indeed, was Rosaura; but he had not recognized her at first! She was dancing with a young man taller than she, a man of exotically pale complexion, his shining coal-black hair combed straight back from the forehead—a slender South American *mestizo,* wearing a monocle in his left eye! It was the monocle, indeed, that had enabled him to recognize Rosaura!

But straightway his eyes grew familiar again with the beautiful image he had adored; and in that passionate contemplation he forgot the partner with whom she was dancing. Yes, he remembered her all too well! There she was, just as he had known her during those nights on the *Côte d'Azur* in her garden above a dark Mediterranean cut by a triangle of moonlight, the ebony darkness of the foreground broken into a mosaic of flowers!

Rosaura could not have been dreaming of his presence. She was wholly engrossed in her partner, or else smiling and nodding at departing couples whom she would see again on some other occasion. Claudio remarked that there was no trace of the telepathic relation that once had seemed to unite them always. In days gone by, Rosaura somehow knew when he entered a room, even though she were standing with her back to him. Now the current of will and memory which his mind darted so intensely in her direction, fell short, like a stream driven with insufficient power. The air was as clear as crystal and seemed to magnify her beauty. But it was something cold and hard, impervious to his passionate thought.

His disappointment and discouragement were so great that he thought of retreating again as he had done at the door of the hotel on the afternoons preceding. Yes, the past was dead! It could not have been more dead; and he himself had killed it! Why persist in attempting a resurrection that would prove impossible?

However, the orchestra fell silent, and that detail, otherwise natural enough and without importance, seemed suddenly to nail him to the floor where he stood. He could not go away now! He could have done that only so long as they were dancing and had not remarked his presence! If he were to withdraw, the

imbecile in the monocle might notice his flight! He had to remain where he was!

At the end of the dance Rallo released Rosaura from his clasp and left the room by another door. Yet still Claudio did not move! The man would soon be back—he had guessed that by his manner! And now almost a panic of uneasiness and excitement seized on him! Rosaura was coming in his direction! Was she really as tall as that? She seemed to have grown monstrously in the year that had passed! Again he thought of retreating, but again he changed his mind. She had not yet observed him in the crowd of spectators and departing guests who were gathered near the entrance of the hall! Alas! Just one of the many guests and spectators crowding the doorway!

She passed without looking at him, without the slightest tremor at his nearness. Doubtless she was going out to order her car or to leave some direction with the clerk. She passed, beautiful, serene, as always, with her usual firm and graceful stride. She did not turn until she heard her name pronounced behind her back. It was Borja, calling:

"Rosaura. . . .!"

She too hesitated a second in recognizing him. But her doubt was short. She flushed, and grew pale; then, immediately, her face was over-spread with the smile which Claudio knew so well, the smile, amiable and hypocritical, which she kept for "her friends." And she was speaking with the voice which he had so often compared to the fall of a pearl into a fountain of water, the voice that seemed to illumine her features with a rosy light of dawn:

"Borja . . . You here! . . . What a surprise! . . . How are you?

And she offered him her hand affably, cordially, as she would have offered it to anyone. She had addressed him in Spanish with the formal *Usted* as though he were an acquaintance she might have met some weeks before in a hotel in another city—just that, and nothing more!

He replied with a *thou,* suppressing the past that had intervened since their last meeting; as though the days of their life

together on the *Côte d'Azur* had been broken by a brief separation to be continued through a reconciliation they both were seeking.

As Claudio recalled that meeting in succeeding days, he could not remember exactly what he said. Nothing was clear in his mind, except that she had stood there gazing at him, listening to him in silence, and with an expression of surprise, as though the words he was uttering were something as distasteful and alarming as they were unexpected. She was silent because she realized the wisdom of not offering a resistance that might exasperate him. It was better to leave free egress to the flood of words that began surging upon her ears in a subdued roar of confession and repentance. In that way it would spend its force by spreading out over a silent plane unruffled by obstacles. His own voice, Borja could remember well enough! It was the voice of a humble and helpless lover returning to the feet of his idol to implore forgiveness! Yes, the threats she had uttered on the *Venusberg,* in answer to his petition for leave to depart! They were being fulfilled! Here he was, a suppliant before her! He had repented of his madness! Had they not been in a public resort, he would have thrown himself prostrate at her feet!

"Tell me you forgive me! Look at me with eyes of pity! Take me back again! Now I know how alone in the world I am without you! I need you as lover, friend, sister! To find you here brings back to me all I have lost. I am more aware of it now than a half hour ago! Say something! Insult me if you wish! But don't stand there smiling at me and saying nothing! Oh, your silence. . . .!"

And at last she did speak, in short abrupt sentences, shrugging her shoulders, but without smoothing the smile from her lips:

"My dear Borja, what can I say? You went away! That was your choice! You could not expect me to pass my life waiting for you to think of coming back again! I supposed you had forgotten me forever. Men like you weary of everything, even of the happiness they have!"

"But I wrote you!" he cried passionately, reaching for her

hand. "How many times, how many letters, I wrote you! But then I would tear them up! It would be hard to explain just why!"

But she withdrew her fingers from his fierce clutch:

"Well, I tore up the letters I wrote, I guess. But that must have been at first, when I was still feeling the anguish of our separation. Do you know, Borja? It is lucky we have in us two things that help us to live: a power to forget, and a power to hope. The one we need to recover from yesterday! The other we need to make tomorrow worth while. But there is no going back to a past that is dead. Why try to bring to life something you killed yourself? Go your own way, Borja, and good luck to you!"

She paused for a moment, and then added, as though trying to seem less harsh:

"I hear you are going to marry Stella Bustamante at last. I am thinking of marrying too—I don't know just when, maybe very soon, just to surprise people. . . ."

Borja's eloquence was again upon her; but now there was something threatening in his tone. He alone could be her husband! He had a greater claim on her than anyone else! Even Urdaneta, the Doctor-General, in spite of the glamour of romance woven about him and his reputation as a bully, had yielded the field to him! As for the future, he, Claudio, would . . . he would kill, there, anyone who tried to deprive him of something he considered his own!

This Borgesque assertiveness seemed to anger Rosaura:

"I suppose I have nothing to say in the matter! I suppose I am to be dropped and taken at your will and pleasure, the way the high and mighty of the visored caps and long knives do on the waterfront with their females! At bottom, Borja, you are too original in your way of loving! I admit it intrigues a woman at first, but in the end . . . it's a calamity! How adorable you can be as a lover, I know only too well; but as a husband? Imagine you as a husband! Never a moment's rest! No assurance as to which way the wind is going to blow! And

meantime, my dear boy, I am getting old. The time is coming when I shall have to be loved for my own sake, without being asked or expected to make all the sacrifices required for winning and holding a man. I am looking for a husband, Borja, not for a lover; and the last thing in the world you could ever be is the husband of a woman like me! Doubtless you would do very well with a young girl who loves you blindly and has not learned your defects. But with me, a woman accustomed to being courted, flattered, pursued, never called upon to tolerate the slightest mastery on the part of a man, why . . . let me tell you something, Borja! You are the only man for whom I have ever melted a little, and, you must admit, it was a great mistake! . . ."

In all this harangue, what most angered Claudio was the persistent allusion she kept making to the possibility of her marrying. And in that he saw encircling manœuvres of the man in the monocle, who had all along been trying to fill her with the notion of giving a legal form to their affair. After all, that contemptible *gigolo* was succeeding where the Doctor-General had failed, perhaps because he was an older man! But where he, Borja, had also failed! Women approaching middle-age succumb so readily to the ascendancy of youth!

Claudio retorted with words coldly blistering for the man who had gained such an influence over her. An ignorant snob, half red, half black, whose one unquestioned talent was to move his feet to the tune of a saxophone without shaking loose the glass-eye he wore in his face! She would never be happy with such a person! He could dance with anyone!

"Don't you worry!" Rosaura interrupted with laughing self-assurance. "He will dance with no one except me, and not even with me after we are married! We are going to change our manner of living. You may have forgotten that I have children. I am going to devote the rest of my life to them, abandoning my career as an elderly debutante which I have protracted too long. . . ."

Borja answered, fearfully, his voice breaking:

"But can one forget an experience such as ours so readily?

Nothing of all that happiness still remains between us. . . .?"

An expression of sadness, of pity perhaps, flitted across Rosaura's face at sight of her lover's desperation. She answered quite as sadly:

"It was a dream, Claudio! It was a beautiful dream! Now forget it!"

She was truly moved. It was as though she could not bear to look upon the days that had been lost. She answered in a half-audible whisper, almost thinking aloud:

"Just a dream, just a wonderful, beautiful dream. . . . Everyone dreams, I suppose!"

She awoke from her moment's revery with a start and stammered half in fright:

"I must be going, Borja. We may talk some other time more at our leisure. Perhaps at Enciso's! You go there sometimes, I hear. But it can't be now! We are already attracting attention! Good-bye, Claudio, good-bye! . . ."

Her tone this time was hard, mechanical. She turned away toward the coatroom. But she had offered him her hand with her farewell. He had seized it and was holding it, preventing her from escaping. Instinctively he followed her eyes as she looked around. The man in the monocle was standing there a few steps away, his back against a column, impatience written over all his features. He did not lower his eyes as Borja looked at him aggressively. The glitter of glass in the man's face seemed to add a leer of insolence to his expression. It roused a boyish rage in Claudio. It suddenly occurred to him that even if he had never set eyes on Lopez Rallo before that afternoon, Rallo must have known about him. Undoubtedly there was a calculation in the stare of that monocle! Claudio was the only person in the world likely to disturb Rallo's tranquillity as a lover and spoil his chance of a profitable marriage!

But after this exchange of glances, Rallo thought it necessary to step forward with cold politeness. He addressed Señora de Pineda alone, ignoring Claudio as someone scarcely worthy of his attention:

"Señora, they are waiting! If you will allow me. . . ." And he offered her his arm, as though they were ending a dance and he were showing her to her table.

Rosaura raised her hand to take the proffered arm. But she did not get that far. Something unheard of, crude, beyond the pale of social convention, halted her gesture in mid-air. Claudio had retreated a step before the unexpected approach of his rival; but then he felt as though all the electric bulbs in the chandeliers about the hall were whirling round and round into one circling flame that seared his whole being with liquid fire. Oh, that dagger of Valentino! Oh, for a passionate, brutal life of action beyond the compromises of so-called civilized existence! And without a word, without even an exclamation of anger, he raised his hand and delivered a resounding blow on the face of the man before him.

The cuff produced a result that had never before been heard of in the world frequented by Lopez Rallo. His monocle seemed always to be part and parcel of his person as though fastened in his eye-socket with screws. For the first time in history it dropped to the floor with a jingle half smothered by the carpeting. Rallo seemed lost without that auxiliary. He stooped and recovered it, put it back in its place, and then turned to clinch with his assailant.

But Rosaura had stepped between them and the glance of contemptuous wrath with which she surveyed Borja extinguished his anger as under a dash of cold water:

"How ridiculous! Why bother with such a clown!"

Borja was unable to continue his reflections very long. The pretty widow turned away on the arm of her future husband. The man was following her unresisting, with a piece of white cardboard in one hand. Claudio guessed it was his own visiting card, though he could not recall having offered it. Perhaps he had done so at his rival's demand; or perhaps he had presented it himself in unconscious imitation of tableaux he had so often seen on the stage or screen.

He left the hotel in apparent calm. Few could have noticed

the incident. During his conversation with Rosaura the last dancers had left the grill. It was the hour just before dinner when the guests were in their rooms and the corridors of the hotel were empty.

Yet he ate his dinner in his *trattoria* with more appetite than usual:

"I got it off my mind, anyway, and that's something, let them say what they will."

And he looked down with some pride at the back of his hand, which he thought was still red from the vigor of his blow.

That same evening before he left the restaurant two gentlemen appeared and asked to see him. They had come from his home, whence the Italian servant, familiar with his habits, had referred them to the café. They were representatives of Señor don Rodolfo Lopez Rallo.

Claudio introduced them to his friend, the Spanish sculptor. The appointment would be for the following forenoon! And the sculptor hurried away to the Spanish Embassy—not Señor Bustamante's, but the other, accredited to the King of Italy, on the Quirinal. There he would find a friend, a military man, who would assist him in his duties as second.

Claudio had hardly finished dressing the following morning when an automobile drew up and halted before his door. Don Manuel Enciso de las Casas came hurrying into the studio, without apologizing for the unseasonable interruption, as though a matter of immense importance had arisen, something so important that the scruples and formalities to which the diplomat lived a slave might well be suspended for a moment.

"I have heard all about it!" he exclaimed dramatically, falling into a manner he had had ample occasion to study from his box at the theatre.

One of Rallo's seconds was the new secretary at Enciso's legation—the man had just arrived in Rome and Borja did not know him. He had informed his chief of the whole affair! At first, Enciso had objected. Duelling was forbidden by the laws of the Church. As a Catholic diplomat he could not knowingly connive

in such a sin. No one connected with his establishment could participate, in any connection, in a duel! But the young man had adduced considerations of comradeship, the solidarity which men in the profession owed their colleagues. Was he not in the position of a *guardia nobile* of the Pope? They likewise were prohibited from participating in acts of violence; but as men of honor they could not meekly accept an insult while in uniform. Enciso had not thought of that! He had finally yielded to the petition of his subordinate.

Life, for the artist-diplomat, seemed to have acquired a new and romantic interest during the two hours preceding. Not only was he allowing his secretary to act as second in an affair of honor! He was taking a personal interest in the outcome, and had already paid his calls on both principals! Could he do anything less? Lopez Rallo was nephew to one of the most famous writers on international law; but Borja was just as much entitled to his regard, not only because of the historic name he bore, but also from his connections with don Aristides Bustamante, his former guardian—even though they might be somewhat estranged at the moment. Of course, there could be no question of a peaceful adjustment! He had just come from the man with the monocle. Rallo stood adamant—out to kill or be killed! Such an insult, in the presence of Señora de Pineda, made life without vengeance no life at all! Claudio's sneering mirth in referring to his rival convinced Enciso that talk of friendly mediation would be just as fruitless on the other side.

"Oh, these women, these women!" the diplomat exclaimed in feigned sorrow. "What a terrible thing passion is!"

At the bottom of his heart this respectable father of a family enjoyed the violence and scandal associated with rivalries in love. He was now childishly content, jubilant even, that at last a chance had come to him to figure in a duel in real life, such as, so far, he had only read of in books. It was quite reasonable, moreover, that two men should be willing to kill each other for a woman like Rosaura de Pineda, around whose adorable figure his amorous fancies had been playing in secret these many years.

Whenever a woman became the occasion of physical conflict between two men, whether in literature, on the stage, or in the newspapers, Enciso's mind always turned to Rosaura de Pineda. She was the personification in his eyes of all joyous dangers and adventures that embellish, or mayhap embitter, the dull routine of life. Had he not been just the man he was, a diplomat with the responsibility of a nation upon his shoulders, he would have ended by doing something crazy for that woman, just as these young men were doing! How he envied them!

"I am in touch," he said, "with all the witnesses in charge of the encounter. I have even placed my influence at their disposal."

Enciso had, in fact, obtained the loan of a villa, a property on the outskirts of Rome belonging to an Austrian princess, but held at the moment by the Italian government. He had, of course, enjoined absolute secrecy upon all parties.

"Do not breathe a word of it!" he cautioned. "Imagine what would happen if the Vatican were to hear! A minister-plenipotentiary to the Holy See mixed up with a duel!"

The encounter was to take place that afternoon. Enciso had never witnessed a duel. He would take this opportunity to see one.

"Oh," he said, "you will, of course, not be aware of my presence. The gardener has arranged a little shelter, where I can sit without being seen. Besides neither of you will get hurt; my heart tells me that!"

It was this presentiment that inclined the good-natured Enciso to look forward to the approaching combat with such lightheartedness. For his part, he would have preferred a duel with rapiers. These modern weapons were not at all to his liking. Gunpowder, he thought, had put an end to the age of poetry.

"Besides, my dear fellow," he resumed, "as I have often told you: I am a Cardinal of the Renaissance, born four centuries behind my time; one of those Churchmen on the lines of Rodrigo Borgia, who appeared at Church festivities in riding boots with a sword at his belt and a plume in his cap. Pistols somehow do not

belong to my time, though I suppose we have to put up with the world we are born into."

Lopez Rallo had insisted on pistols as weapons better calculated to encompass the destruction of his enemy. In a brush with rapiers, the duel would end at the first scratch.

"They say he's a good shot," said Enciso, "and you are supposed to be as good with one weapon as the other. But no blood is going to be shed, I am sure of that! I never go wrong when I have such feelings!"

Claudio shrugged his shoulders at these references to the aptitude of his antagonist. He had learned duelling from the ground up; and years before in Madrid he had practised long and carefully with the pistol.

"I haven't had a pot at anything for some time," he said, "but I assure you my first bullet will make splinters of that monocle—no doubt about that!"

Enciso was alarmed at this blood-curdling ferocity:

"Oh, now, my dear fellow, not that! You are not really going to aim at him! And he's not going to aim at you! I have made that condition, and he and you will both obey me. This is just an affair among gentlemen! You are both good fellows and afterwards . . . well, we'll see . . . I'll have a talk with the lady and try to arrive at a solution satisfactory to everyone—though just what it could be I do not see!"

Some seconds of meditation seemed to throw no light on that important point, so he added, hurriedly:

"Well, for the moment, we have the other question before us—what is to happen a few hours hence?"

And thereupon Enciso drew a purse from his inside pocket, opened it, and produced a little envelope of the kind used for visiting cards.

"My dear Borja," he said, "promise me that you will carry this in the coat you wear this afternoon. It is the request of a man who knows more about life than you do. Ask no questions! Do as I say!"

Enciso's reluctance to be questioned was evidently designed to

provoke that very thing. He was eager to explain the mystery of the little envelope. Claudio stood holding it in his right hand, looking at Enciso inquiringly. The diplomat made up his mind to retain the secret no longer. The envelope contained half of a little print, picturing the statues of the Three Wise Men to be found in the Cathedral at Cologne. Anyone bearing a scrap of that holy print on his person could never die a violent death! Doubtless, the other half of the print, Enciso had given to Claudio's adversary on his visit earlier that morning.

"Don't laugh, Borja, don't laugh!" he cried. "A German Cardinal, who is not only a gentleman but a great scholar and a friend of mine, has told me any number of miracles this piece of paper has wrought. You have got to take the word of such a man! He never talks irresponsibly; he never lies! Don't be surprised that I believe him, man of the world though I may be—'too much of an artist!' my rivals and competitors in the profession sometimes say."

And he added with a certain solemn grandiloquence he was wont to affect:

" 'Twixt heaven and earth there be many things we mortals cannot understand.' You know who said that, as well as I do!"

Claudio could not see how Shakespeare's authority could serve as voucher for the miraculous powers of a bisected print of the Three Wise Men of Cologne; but the artist-diplomat added in self-justification, as he noticed Borja's smile:

"It will do you no good to make fun of me. I have told you over and over again: I am a man of another epoch. I am one of those old fellows who believed both in the Virgin Mary and in the Goddess Venus, and wore scapularies primed with sacred wafers, while celebrating magical incantations and casting horoscopes. They were great heathen, great sinners; but they did not doubt the power of God nor a life hereafter. I am like a Renaissance Cardinal in another respect: I have a family and no end of children—all legitimate, to be sure."

CHAPTER V

Sunset

A GREAT peace seemed to have descended on Claudio's spirit, leaving him indifferent to everything about him—as it were, a cool breeze blowing from the Infinite for him alone, since no one could enjoy its refreshing contact more than he. What had happened twenty-four hours before stood out in his mind in the relief of something actually present: a dark background of trees; an array of greensward flecked with white clover; before him the figure of a man, Lopez Rallo, in a black suit, with the coat collar turned up almost to his ears as though to protect himself from a rain that was not there . . . an elbow crooked under his right hand, raised on high to the level of his eyes and serving as prop for a great pistol.

Claudio could see himself in the same posture. At his back, probably, rose a similar curtain of green. Enciso de las Casas, shivering with excitement, must have been in hiding there behind one of those masses of leaves. Three claps of someone's hands, and a voice counting each clap, one by one. Lopez Rallo's arm stretched out on a level with his eyes. So did his own. He had made up his mind to kill, but less in anger than in self-interest. That monocle was in his way—it should be put out of his way! And he utilized the short intervals between the three claps and the three calls to take his aim, peering over the sight of his weapon to find that circlet of glass which his antagonist had kept on, perhaps to annoy him. He heard the crack of the pistol in front of him—it seemed very far away—and he pressed the trigger of his own. But he did not hear the report. At that instant he felt a shock high up on his right thigh. It reminded him of a sensation he had had as a boy when hit by a stone in the same spot, in a battle with other urchins of his age. It flashed through

his mind: Rallo's bullet must have struck the ground, and driven a pebble against him on the rebound. It could not be anything serious. He held his position with no sensation of failing strength, solidly balanced on his two feet, his shoulders erect—ready to continue the combat! The seconds would soon be stepping forward with new pistols for a second exchange! Curious how that pebble burned! It was like a caustic, pressed into his muscle!

Yes, the seconds were coming forward, the four of them on a run! But with the two doctors, and the gardener in charge of the villa, and other persons, whose presence he had not noticed before! And there from behind a bush rose Enciso de las Casas of the diplomatic corps, pale, excited, gesticulating wildly.

They must have seen Claudio stagger as his right leg gave way, though he had not been conscious of its doing so.

This general rush of people towards him seemed to sharpen his senses. He could feel a wet spot around the burn on his leg. Could it be blood?

After that—just a crowd of faces, excited eyes, arms waving in gesture, mouths uttering words that struck his ears but made no sense. His pistol was taken from him. Despite his eagerness to continue the combat he lost his stance. He could feel arms under his arms, supporting him, trying to lift him from his feet. He remembered shaking them off. No, he was all right! He could walk by himself! If he felt any pain at all in his right leg, it passed after a second; or rather, the wounded member seemed to be losing all sensation, as though it belonged to someone else. And now he found himself lying on his back on a hard bed in a shabbily furnished room—a room in the gardener's house. The four seconds were gathered in a group near the door, while two physicians were fussing about the bed. They were taking off his clothes to examine the wound. Another touch against the burning place on his leg, cold, not very painful! Prostrate as he was, he could not see the faces of the doctors; but he heard their exclamations of surprise—surprise at the damage caused by the bullet which he had felt as a mere pebble! Mortal

wounds were probably like that! Ah, but that hurt! . . . On the other side of his leg! . . . Yes, one of the doctors was cutting him! But then a sudden sense of relief like an aching tooth at last opened! The bullet had pierced the muscle, going through to the other side and stopping there just under the skin! No trouble at all to remove it!

"That's what you call luck!" said the officer from the Spanish legation who had acted as his second. "A millimetre to the right and you would have been crippled for life!"

The men in the room now gathered about the bed, jovial, their tension relieved. The doctors were talking of arteries, muscles, bones that might have been broken. Borja raised himself on his elbows, smiling, though he felt very weak. There was Enciso de las Casas at the door, his eyes lifted heavenward in attitude of conviction. He was shaking his head and saying things the others seemed not to understand:

"You can say what you please! But can there be any doubt, now?"

Claudio lay back on his bed again. The doctors were bandaging the wound. An odor of antiseptic reached his nostrils. Then he found himself sitting up, standing up, walking, indeed, toward an automobile that was parked before the gardener's door.

"Nothing at all!" he said, "I am not hurt!"

The four seconds had gathered around him in evident embarrassment . . . one little matter still remained! Rallo was waiting near by. He was sorry, very sorry! Might they not shake hands—let bygones be bygones?

Claudio felt the smile wilt from his face and he made a gesture as though brushing an insect from in front of him.

"No . . . That? . . . No!"

The suggestion seemed utterly absurd to him. Far less absurd, attractive rather, the figures of Cesare Borgia and Micalet Corella that flitted through his mind. Those two were men! They symbolized the brutality of human life in all its tragic splendor, without these petty hypocrisies! And Enciso was muttering there behind him!

"A miracle, no doubt about it, a miracle!"

And Borja's physician was nodding assent:

"A clean cut, straight through! But we've got to be careful!"

They left Claudio in bed in his own studio, warning him that he would feel some pain during the night. But he could not have been better, nor in better humor, as he talked through the evening with the throng of acquaintances who had come to call on him. It seemed as though the bell on his garden gate were ringing all the time. People, even from the Bustamante circle, whom he had first insulted and then forgotten, were there leaving their cards and inquiring as to his condition. His duel was already the talk of the hotels and legations.

He fell asleep and slept soundly, normally, as though nothing had occurred, and with hardly any pain save a throbbing in his wound, and no discomfort except the odor of antiseptic that pervaded the room. The doctor, who had attended him at home in the evening, came to waken him well along in the forenoon. With him was His Excellency, Enciso de las Casas.

Claudio greeted the diplomat with a gesture of good-humored scorn:

"I was just thinking—your Three Wise Men did me no good!"

Enciso raised his hands in deprecation of such atheism. Doubt the miracle? Thanks to those Three Wise Men the bullet had pierced the soft part of the thigh without doing any serious harm!

"Believe me, boy, I was terribly frightened at first. And I was still worrying last night when I sat discussing the matter with . . . well, with friends of ours. But now, from what the doctor tells me, I am sure there is nothing to fear."

The Italian physician resumed his explanation, flattered that such an important diplomat could have confidence in his skill. Claudio was in the best of health and his muscles were showing wonderful powers of recovery. In a few weeks the wound would be entirely closed, leaving the slightest scar on the right thigh. For that matter, the patient could go about his affairs immediately, using a cane perhaps and limping a little. However, it

would be better if he could stay in bed for a while! That would hasten the cure!

Claudio passed the afternoon and the evening alone. He was weary of all the talk and chatter with his friends, who came to the studio as they would have to the café, filling the air with cigarette smoke and talking of nothing but the duel and Rallo. When he was alone, the events of the preceding days seemed to lose themselves in a distance ever more remote. The man with the monocle and even Rosaura de Pineda became almost imaginary figures such as he might have met in some novel, their vapory outlines so faint that he could alter them at the caprice of his thought. Undoubtedly there were two such people, but how little they interested him! That hot pebble on his right thigh seemed to have driven them out of his life! How much more interesting the life of four centuries before . . . Cesare Borgia and the faithful and terrible Micalet, of whom strangely enough he had thought as he stood there facing his adversary! Yes, how much better to bury himself once more in his books! . . .

The career of "our Cæsar" was drawing to its close. Valentino was to be suddenly vanquished, at the moment when he seemed most powerful, by one of those mysterious and unexpected combinations of chance that often appear in history. Something of the kind had just happened to him, Claudio Borja—a stupid wound in the thigh, just when he had felt most certain of puting a bullet through that ridiculous disk of crystal in the face of his antagonist!

"Life is an irrational thing!" he concluded. "That's why we never master it!"

By July, of the year 1503, the Duke of the Romagnas had little left to do but make a military demonstration through the territories of the Church, to proclaim the permanent re-establishment of the Temporal Power and to consolidate his own authority. The Orsinis were still holding a few unimportant castles which he had deliberately postponed taking in favor of more important tasks. He could attend to them at his leisure! The greater enterprise of subjugating Italy seemed closer than ever to successful

realization. Perugia, Piombino, Elba, and certain counties in Tuscany were already in his possession. Pisa was inviting him to come to her rescue as her savior. Siena had decided not to resist him. Even Florence was reconciling herself to becoming a property of the invincible Duke. With Tuscany incorporated in the Papal States, it would be no great task to annex Milan and Genoa, especially since in both those cities he had many friends. Then he would be free to attack the most powerful of his adversaries, the Venetian Republic, which, for that matter, could offer no effective resistance so far as the mainland was concerned. By that time all Northern and Central Italy would be in his hands and the Pope would pick, like so many ripe apples, Naples, Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia—the islands remaining as advance projections of Borgian Italy into the sea! To be sure, the execution of such a vast program might probably over-reach the lifetime of the Duke's father—Alexander was getting on in years, he was already seventy-two! But he, Valentino, was only twenty-seven; and at the rate he had been going during the past three years, he could easily see himself King of Italy before he was forty. With a view to Cesare's becoming King of United Italy under the sovereignty of the Church, Alexander had been organizing a Sacred College of Italian and Spanish Cardinals carefully selected for Borgian purposes. After Alexander's death, he, Cesare, would hold the Conclaves and Consistories in the palm of his hand, electing the Popes he needed to exercise the spiritual power of the Church, and to delegate all temporal power to him.

"Cesare Borgia," said Claudio to himself, "thought he had taken all his enemies into account. Unfortunately he had overlooked one, of whose existence he was not even aware: the malaria germ. A regiment of invisible microbes from the Roman marshes struck a blow at the rising dignity of the Borgias which the armies of the feudal barons had never been able to deliver."

The so-called marsh fever had been unusually virulent in the Capital during all the summer of the year 1503, counting its daily victims by the hundreds. The Pope first complained of illness on the twelfth of August. On the sixteenth and seventeenth he

submitted to copious bleedings, also imbibing a number of the strange beverages supplied by the medicine of the time. On the eighteenth he failed rapidly, and, aware of his condition, confessed, took communion, and asked that a mass be celebrated at his bedside. By evening of that day he was conscious of great weakness and accepted extreme unction. He died a few hours later, attended by a few intimates, almost all of them Spaniards, and by the Spanish contingent among the Cardinals.

Cesare Borgia was not able to bid farewell to his dying father. At that moment he was himself lying at point of death in a room in the Vatican almost directly over the chamber in which the Pope met his end. The attack of marsh fever from which he was suffering was complicated by symptoms of tertiary syphilis which he had contracted three years before. The black mask, worn in the beginning either to prevent recognition by his enemies or to satisfy a boyish love of mystery, was now necessary to conceal the blotches on his face. The prince charming of the golden hair, regarded as the handsomest gentleman in Rome, was now an object of loathing, his skin discolored and roughened with scurf, and the lobules and the septum of his nose eaten away. This ugliness so suddenly acquired was to give color to the legends of horror which were to be wrapped about the last years of Duke Valentine.

The coincidence that both the Pope and his son fell ill at the same time provoked a new tempest of slanderous conjectures from the Ambassadors of the hostile Powers and from the pamphleteers employed by the feudal families whom the Borgias had dispossessed.

Everything connected with Cesare had to be extraordinary, and the Roman populace was fed on stories of greusome measures employed by Gaspar Torrella, his Spanish physician, in saving him from his mortal attack—treatments which only a man of his endurance could have withstood. A mule, according to some, a bull according to others, was split open alive that the sick man might be warmed in the still bleeding, still shivering body,

whence he was shortly withdrawn to be immersed in a great tub of ice-water.

These fictions could, in fact, have rested on a very flimsy base. Torrella was a physician of great fame coming originally from Valencia—the Pope had made him Bishop in that diocese in reward for his services at the Vatican. Torrella, it seems, actually subjected Cesare to a series of cold immersions. The antithetical treatment involving enclosure in the hot body of a gutted quadruped was invented by excited popular fancy, as it were, out of whole cloth. Valentino was saved in the end, but his convalescence was a slow one. His features always bore the marks of this all but mortal attack.

The Pope himself had died of a germ disease which developed with fulminating speed. Decomposition set in immediately after death and the body, obese and already large of frame, swelled to frightful proportions. The face, blotched and discolored, was shortly quite unrecognizable.

These facts could not be concealed and, since strange notions were current in those days as to the causes of such phenomena, popular imagination ran to the most dramatic and fantastic hypotheses. The Pope, in the first place, had died of poisoning. But the Borgias at that time were the only masters of that deadly art; so the rumor spread that the Pope and his son had by mistake imbibed a poison they had prepared for Cardinal Corneto. Three months after Alexander's death Peter Martyr, the Humanist, a favorite of the Catholic Sovereigns and their envoy in Rome, was the first individual of importance to take up this nonsense in one of the elegant and very readable letters which he knew how to write with an irresponsibility otherwise deplorable. This was sufficient for the pamphleteers hostile to the late Pontiff again to revive the myth of "the Borgia poison" and add new details to a legend already widespread.

According to this story, the Pope and his son had come to the "vineyard"—in other words to the *garçonnière*—of Cardinal Corneto, accompanied by Cardinal Remolino, a Spaniard, and two other Princes of the Church. Alexander's butler had brought

a number of bottles from the Vatican cellars, one of them drugged for the benefit of Corneto. Alexander and Cesare, however, were terribly thirsty after their journey, and the Pope's butler served the wine so hastily that he made a mistake and gave them the wrong bottle.

"This absurd story," Borja reflected, "held the field for three centuries, one writer copying from another and passing it on. A very simple investigation of the facts, in recent times, has proved sufficient to demonstrate its absurdity. In the first place, the idea of guests going to a banquet in a famous man's house carrying their own wine in a number of bottles that their host, no less, might drink from one of them! It is true that the Pope and Cesare dined with Cardinal Corneto. But that was on the fifth of August; and neither of them suffered the slightest inconvenience during the days that followed. The Pope felt the first symptoms of his illness five days later, on the tenth. A physician was not called until the twelfth, when definite traces of fever appeared. The Pope died on the eighteenth, twelve days after the banquet!"

Seventy years of age, Alexander had been notably weakening under the absorbing duties of his high office, to say nothing of the wear and tear incident to his pleasures, which he was continuing into old age. No one was surprised at his death; and since thousands of people in all social ranks were daily falling ill during that epidemic of malaria, no one thought it extraordinary that Cesare should be stricken at the same time. Several Cardinals and Archbishops living in Rome had died during the weeks preceding Alexander's death. On the first of August, eighteen days before his own demise, the Pope had looked down from the windows of the Vatican upon the funeral procession of his nephew, don Juan de Borja the Younger, Cardinal of Monreale. In perfect health at that time so far as he knew, the Pope nevertheless expressed a presentiment of his own end.

"Juan was a strong man," he said to one of his intimates, speaking in Valencian, "but he was too fat. In that respect I am as bad as he was. This summer will be a hard time for fat people!"

It may indeed have been Cesare's slenderness of body, along with his youth, that carried him safely through his attack; but it was a narrow escape even for him and he was confined to his bed for a long time. In conversation with Machiavelli some weeks later he remarked sadly:

"I had anticipated everything that might occur on my father's death and taken steps accordingly; but what I never foresaw was that I might be sick unto death at the very same time!"

Nevertheless, in spite of his prostration, this extraordinary man somewhere found the clear-headedness and the energy to make all possible provisions against the double disaster that had come upon him. Several times an hour messengers plied between his room and the chamber below, where his father lay dying, bringing bulletins of Alexander's condition and finally the details of his last moments. When he learned that the Pope had expired, Cesare called don Michelotto to him and whispered in his ear. He understood that the Pope's demise meant the beginning of a war and that to meet it he would need money in great abundance. The whispered order bade Cesare's terrible *alter ego* to take possession of the treasury of the Vatican at once.

Errands of this kind were like invitations to a banquet to Micalet Corella. At the point of his sword he obtained the keys to the treasury from the chamberlain in charge and the same weapon served to hold other officials in the Pope's house at a safe distance during the seizure. Don Michelotto stood so loyal to his friend and lord that he transported to the room where the Duke lay ill not only the money chests filled with coin but also many jewels of price belonging to the Holy See.

Outside the palace, meantime, disorder reigned. The Orsinis, who had been keeping to cover in fear of Cesare, turned out into the streets on the news of his father's death. The Colonnas hastily gathered a little army from points in the country and advanced on Rome by forced marches. The Savellis, who had been fugitives for years, reappeared at their palace in Rome and turned it into a fortress. All the vassals of the Church who had lost their fiefs, and the *condottieri* hostile to the Borgias, flocked

suddenly to the metropolis or returned to their former estates. Spaniards resident in Rome, and Italians known for their connections with the Borgias, had to raise barricades in front of their houses. The Eternal City was in riot with hostile mobs fighting now here, now there, bringing death to dozens of persons. The Orsinis attacked the residences of Spaniards to burn and plunder them. The Colonnas, age-old rivals of the Orsinis, forgot this antagonism for some days, to devote themselves entirely to Cesare and the latter's friends. The wildest stories ran the streets of Rome as to the death of Alexander the Sixth, most of them invented by enemies of the late Pope's family. Seven devils had appeared at his bedside and carried him off the moment he had breathed his last—this because Alexander had sold his soul to the Devil at the Conclave which elected him, in exchange for twelve years on the Papal throne! One of the Gonzagas wrote home to Mantua:

"When the Pope died, his body began to boil inside, and steam came out of his mouth as though he were a kettle simmering over a fire."

The corpse had, in fact, swollen to such size that it was hard to find a coffin for it, and impossible to screw down the cover after one had been found.

Meantime, the Duke of the Romagnas was mastering his physical prostration by sheer effort of will and meeting every emergency in spite of being confined to his bed. He gave orders in an imperious tone, which showed he had not the slightest doubt of remaining master of Rome, intimidating the College of Cardinals into confirming him in his post as *Gonfaloniere* and sole commander of the Papal army. He would allow no one to interfere in dealing with the disorder in the streets. Fortunately for him, don Michelotto was in fine fettle and paraded the town at the head of Cesare's bodyguard, imposing respect wherever he appeared. The Orsinis and the Colonnas, rioting about the houses inhabited by Spaniards, vanished at the approach of Cesare's pet bulldog. Vainly did the Duke's enemies threaten that the King of Spain was sending the troops in Naples against Rome, and

that Louis the Twelfth was advancing from the North. Lying flat on his back on his bed of pain Cesare compelled the delegates of the Sacred College and the emissaries of the different parties to come to his room and deal directly with him. While don Michelotto and his henchmen were whipping the city into discipline, the Duke was employing a skilful intrigue to detach the Colonnas from the Orsinis—and he finally brought them over to his side. In these difficult moments, to be sure, he had friends of unwavering loyalty about him in the Vatican, notably the writer, Agapito Amalia, his secretary and inseparable companion; and a certain Bonafede, Bishop of Chiusi, a young and courageous Italian with more of the fighter than the Churchman about him, who proved as intrepid and ferocious as don Michelotto and stood ready to give his life in the Duke's defence. It was one of Cesare's traits that he could inspire his intimates to worship him to the point of extreme sacrifice.

Propped up on his pillows he dictated a new treaty of alliance with Louis the Twelfth, which the French Ambassador signed. At his order the Sacred College proclaimed by herald throughout Rome that anyone attacking the Duke of the Romagnas or any of the latter's men should be condemned in life and property. Proclamation of the Conclave *in sede vacante* forbade the bearing of arms within the limits of Rome during the election of a new Pope. In compliance with that mandate, the Orsinis, the Colonnas, and other factions, withdrew from the city on the second of September.

Prematurely on his feet through heroic resolve to appear again in public well or ill, Cesare likewise submitted to this decree, but with greater display than the Italian barons had done, parading forth like a great prince, master of the city and sure of his power. He first paid his troops with the money scraped together by don Michelotto. At the head of the line of march rumbled thirteen pieces of artillery, what with cannon and bombards. His cavalry flanked a hundred carts containing the Duke's personal baggage. The knights rode in faultless line and in absolute silence, bearing witness to the solid discipline their General's

strong hand had established among them. As he left the Vatican through the *Porta Viridaria,* Cesare preserved that majestic dignity which was never to desert him. His litter of crimson brocade was carried by twelve halberdiers. Behind them pranced his warhorse, led by a page, with a caparison of black velvet embroidered with the escutcheon of Valence. The Ambassadors of Germany, France and Spain attended him to the city walls and even beyond. At one of the gates he found Cardinal Cesarini waiting with an important order from the Sacred College. Cesare addressed the messenger haughtily from his litter: he could not grant him audience! The truth was, Cesare had to make a superhuman effort to maintain his physical composure and not faint away.

All the Borgias left the Vatican under his protection. His mother, *la Vannozza,* was with him. The moment the news of the Pope's death spread abroad, the mobs tried to attack and plunder her house. Close behind Cesare's litter rode don Geoffrey Borgia, but alone. The licentious Sancha, at the moment, was still a prisoner in the Castle of Sant' Angelo, whither she had been relegated some months before on order of Alexander the Sixth. Cesare had just commanded her release, asking the Colonnas to see that she got safely to Naples. He had been especially careful about children of his clan, making sure that they occupied the safest places in the line of march. Four little boys walked just behind his litter, one of them the Duke of Sermoneta, a son of Lucretia and the Neapolitan Bisceglia (the child was to die a few years later). Another was the Prince of Camerino, the last scion of the dead Pontiff, born of Giulia Farnese. Cesare always manifested a passionate affection for this little half-brother so much younger than he. The other two were children of his own by mothers unknown (since he always kept his serious relations secret). Don Michelotto brought up the rear of the line, his sword drawn in his right hand, and scowling now to one side, now to the other, in aggressive mien. He and his men were leaving Rome in a very bad humor—a pack of bulldogs willing to bark, but more willing to bite, at the slightest sign of trouble.

"This retreat from Rome," thought Borja, "so like an apotheosis in its colorful majesty, was the end of Cesare's short and glorious career. He was to know no further triumphs thereafter. With but four years more to live he was really setting forth upon a slow and protracted agony."

In the Conclave he could count on the Spanish contingent of thirteen Cardinals and, sick as he was, he made a desperate fight of it, continually pressing upon the Vatican with agents and emissaries in an effort to control the election. All the Borgias of ecclesiastical career had been elevated to the Sacred College—even Francisco Borja, a native of Sueca near Valencia, who began as a papal chamberlain to become, successively, Treasurer of the Vatican, Archbishop of Cosenza, and finally Cardinal of Saint Cecilia. At one time as many as ten Borgias could be counted among the high prelates of the Church. Vera and Remolino, moreover, Cesare's two schoolmates at the university, had received red hats, along with a Valencian cleric, Juan Lopez, who was a great friend of the Borgia family. Such intimates of Alexander as Marrades and Pedro Carranza reached archbishoprics without stirring from the Vatican. Even Burckhardt, the author of the *Diarium,* had received a mitre, while secretly composing a cold-blooded defamation of his benefactor.

Giuliano della Rovere, the most implacable of Alexander's slanderers, though openly feigning friendship for the Borgias, expected to carry off the papal diadem with the support of the Italian Cardinals. Cesare's last battle, and last victory, was to procure the election of Cardinal Piccolomini, nephew to the late Pope Pius the Second, a man eighty years old at the time, and blessed with a goodly number of children like most of the ecclesiastical princes of his day. The Pope-Elect took the name chosen by his uncle, the novelist, and was crowned as Pius the Third, straightway confirming Cesare in his titles as *Gonfaloniere* of the Church, and Duke of the Romagnas. The Duke, so terrible with his adversaries, was capable of the boldest sacrifices in behalf of his faithful friends. Aside from the fact that the Piccolominis had always been partisans of the Borgias, Pius the Third

had a particular affection for Cesare. He had known him as a baby and could not forget how the young man had saved his life on one occasion by defending him from an attack on his person. Unfortunately for the Duke of the Romagnas, the new Pope was so aged and infirm as not to have been able to attend the Conclave. The *Gonfaloniere* hastened back to Rome, dispatching trusted emissaries to all the domains of the Church which he had conquered, to hold them in line. The foes of the Borgias feigned obedience to Pius the Third, but in order to betray the Captain-General the more surely. Venice was secretly organizing the expelled barons. Florence had once more dispatched Machiavelli to dance attendance on the dread enemy of the Republic, with directions to assassinate him if opportunity offered. But Ferdinand the Catholic was to deliver the *coup de grace*. He had always disliked and mistrusted this young man trained in his own school. It was the hatred of the old master for the proficiency of the upstart pupil. On order from his King, Gonzalo de Cordova recalled to Naples for incorporation in the Royal Army all Spaniards who had been serving with Valentino. Hugo de Moncada and Cesare's best captains found it their duty to abandon him at the moment when the iron circle was drawing tightest. Don Micalet Corella and the troops immediately under his command were the only ones to flout the order, electing to stand at Valentino's side for the very reason that his sun was setting! When the Duke lost the support of these three thousand Spaniards, a small force perhaps, but the best disciplined in Italy, the *condottieri* and the feudal barons thought the moment had come to be rid of the conqueror of the Romagnas. They encircled Rome with their bands and finally entered the city, to demand of Pius the Third that he hand the Duke over to them dead or alive.

Cesare took refuge in the Castle of Sant' Angelo, carried thither on a stretcher through the underground passageway which connected the fortress with the Vatican. Don Michelotto and other friends were far away at the moment in Romagna, looking after the castles which he had entrusted to their care. But a few faith-

ful supporters were at hand, notably the spiritual and rough-handed Bishop Bonafede. Valentino was in a position to offer stubborn defence in the ancient Mole of Hadrian, which Alexander's remodelling had rendered all but impregnable. His adversaries soon abandoned the idea of reducing him by armed attack and turned to intrigue with Pius the Third, to have him prosecuted legally and declared an outlaw.

So the month of October passed, in the year 1503. Giuliano della Rovere had meantime found ways to win the French contingent in the Sacred College to his side. He now regarded his election as assured, and thought the time had come to be rid of the dotard Piccolomini, who gave promise of lasting too long. The Pope was suffering from an affection in one of his feet. His physician executed a stupid but effective operation on the diseased member and the apostolic throne was vacant in a flash.

Despite his hatred of the Borgias, Rovere began negotiations with Valentino and made all sorts of offers with a view to securing the votes of the thirteen Spanish Cardinals.

"The future Julius the Second," thought Claudio, "so unjustly glorified by the historians of his time, was really worse than the worst of the Borgias, adding to the ruthlessness he shared with them a revolting element of treachery and hypocrisy they never knew. Part of his life he passed insulting Rodrigo Borgia, who had been his friend in earlier days. Then he became the servile and fawning flatterer of the Borgias when they had defeated his policies and forgiven his disloyalty. In his eyes Alexander the Sixth was a 'Jew'; but that did not prevent him from marrying members of his own family to members of the House of Borgia, the better to gain a point of influence. The moment he became Pope, he closed the 'Rooms of the Borgias' in the Vatican, notwithstanding their marvelous decorations. 'I cannot live,' he said in hypocritical wrath, 'in an apartment contaminated by that circumcised *marrano!*' This declaration was made within days of a fawning supplication addressed to Cesare in order to secure the Spanish votes which resulted in his election. If the pontificate of Julius the Second had a certain splendor in the political field, the

fact was due entirely to the conquests of the son of Alexander the Sixth who had freed and enlarged the States of the Church with his sword. The same might be said of the arts. Michelangelo began working in Rome in the pay of Cesare Borgia!"

Rovere proposed that the Duke of the Romagnas occupy in his service the position he had held under Alexander the Sixth. In fact, the moment he assumed the tiara, as Julius the Second, he confirmed Cesare's title as *Gonfaloniere* of the Church. The sick man soon perceived, however, that the new Pope was dealing treacherously with him, as he had always done. Julius straightway dispatched emissaries to all the castles in the Papal States to replace the governors holding them for Borgia. What was the Pope's surprise when his agents came hurrying back to Rome, declaring that the inhabitants of the Romagnas adored Valentino and were standing by him, refusing to submit to the personal government of the Pope. Julius was enraged, and his first thought was to imprison Cesare in the Castle of Sant' Angelo. Later on he deferred to the protest of the Spanish Cardinals and detained him instead in an apartment in the Vatican (the so-called Tower of the Borgias), where Valentino was still lying ill. Christmas and New Year's Day passed. During the first weeks of the year 1504 the Duke was still in bed attended by faithful friends and taking only such food as they prepared. He had plenty of reason to fear treatment similar to that just previously apportioned to the helpless Pius the Third. For that matter, the final victory of the Spaniards over the French in the Kingdom of Naples gave Julius good reason to withhold any measures he may have been contemplating against the life of his Captain. As late as April, 1504, the Pope was still fighting to gain control in Romagna. Finally Cesare agreed to deliver his strongholds in exchange for liberty and life, and sent orders forthwith to all his governors that they hand over the cities and castles under their charge to representatives of the Pope. Among the delegates of Valentino, however, were don Michelotto and other Spaniards, notably Gonzalo de Mirafuente. They refused to comply.

"When the Duke is free," answered Mirafuente, "and writes

me to that effect, I shall obey. So long as the Pope holds him prisoner, I shall decline to recognize his signature."

Cesare, to tell the truth, was no longer in the Vatican. The newly elected Pope had transferred him to the Castle on the seashore at Ostia, assuring him that he would receive permission to sail away the moment the Romagnas surrendered. One by one the cities began offering their submission, always reluctantly, and always with noisy demonstrations against the suppression of the fair, and even democratic, rule which the son of Alexander the Sixth had been according them. These popular testimonials in favor of Cesare were the prolongation of his triumphal exit from the Vatican, which had taken place the year before! Not till the twenty-sixth of April was he finally allowed to board a galley sent on by Gonzalo de Cordova, who likewise supplied a safe-conduct drawn up in the name of Ferdinand the Catholic. Cesare reached Naples at last with an escort of two men: the one his Spanish schoolmate of former days, Cardinal Remolino; the other, Juanito Grasica, his page, also a Spaniard.

Gonzalo de Cordova quite succumbed to the grandeur of Cesare's schemes as these were revealed to him in a few conversations. Valentino was still dreaming of a great and united Italy, though, for the moment, such a Kingdom could exist only under the protection of a great power such as France or Spain. Now that fate had driven him to Naples, a possession of Ferdinand the Catholic, he was ready to undertake the conquest of Italy in behalf of the Sovereigns of Spain. The Grand Captain, acting as Viceroy, actually authorized him to organize an expedition against Tuscany. Borgia had a fair army assembled in less than a month. Soldiers of all nationalities flocked to his standard the moment news spread abroad that Valentino was again to take the field. His artillery had been put aboard ship and his troops were ready to embark when he was suddenly placed under arrest by Gonzalo de Cordova, in compliance with an order from the King of Spain.

The tortuous and incomprehensible policies pursued by Ferdinand at all times and on all occasions offer many other examples

of such reversals. His purpose in this case was to do a favor to Julius the Second, who desired to have Alexander's son again in his power in order to hasten the pacification of the Romagnas. Only a few of the castles had surrendered to the Pope. Others, the more important ones, were holding out in open rebellion, which the Pope could not suppress with the troops at his disposal. Gonzalo de Mirafuente and other Borgia captains controlled the best possessions of Duke Valentino. The Pope had tried to overcome their resistance by using a number of Spaniards resident in Rome, who were at outs with the Borgias through the failure of the latter to provide them with lucrative employments in the days of their power. One such, a former servant of Cesare Borgia, went to Forlì as envoy of Julius the Second and attempted to bribe Mirafuente, who was governing there; but Mirafuente berated him for his disloyalty as a Spaniard to the Borgias who were also of Spanish origin; and after riddling his body with dagger-thrusts, hanged him from one of the battlements of the Castle. With Cesare's lieutenants in this frame of mind, the Pope felt obliged to seek the support of the King of Spain.

The safe-conduct which Ferdinand had issued to Valentino was of great concern to Gonzalo de Cordova. The existence of such a document in the face of Borgia's arrest was very compromising. It was not on the captive's person. Perhaps in fear of just such an emergency, Valentino had entrusted it to Baldasare de' Scipioni, one of his Italian lieutenants. Finally, the Viceroy of Naples managed to secure it through the mediation of the Colonnas and tore it up. Borgia held his ground in the face of prayers and intimidations for three months, steadfastly refusing to instruct his governors in Romagna to evacuate the castles in their possession. Finally an agreement was reached in August and Cesare issued the command desired.

The surrender of his faithful defenders took place with great ceremony and with widespread demonstrations of affection for the vanquished general—adequate evidence, if such were needed, of the love and loyalty he was able to inspire in those about him.

At Forlì Gonzalo de Mirafuente exacted an enormous indemnity from the Pope as reimbursement for moneys he claimed to have spent in perfecting the fortifications. The evacuation itself took the form of a triumphal march of the garrison. As the gate of the citadel swung open, Mirafuente charged forth in full armor, as though appearing in a tourney; before him rode a herald, proclaiming the name and titles of Cesare Borgia, Duke of the Romagnas; at his side, his two lieutenants, Fracassa and Numai; and bringing up the rear, a squadron of Spanish and Italian knights. The resistance had lasted nine months.

There can be no doubt that this formal and spectacular surrender at Forlì, the very center of the rebellion, was effected in exchange for promises made by Gonzalo de Cordova in the name of the King of Spain. But nine days went by; then instead of setting Borgia free, the Viceroy put him aboard a Spanish galley with a single companion, Juanito Grasica, his page. The galley then set forth for Spain convoyed by a fleet of other vessels—there was still danger that Cesare's numerous partisans along the Italian shore might put to sea to rescue him.

Gonzalo de Cordova was to feel the shame of this treachery to the last day of his life. On his death-bed he thought of Cesare Borgia and bemoaned the breach of chivalry he had committed in obedience to the orders of his King. Baldasare Scipioni, the *condottiere* who had been tricked into allowing Cesare's safe-conduct to escape from his hands, was so outraged at the procedure of Cordova and Ferdinand that, in accord with a custom of chivalry in those days, he published a challenge in all the cities of Christendom offering to meet in mortal combat anyone willing to sustain that Ferdinand and Isabel of Spain had not deported themselves as traitors, "to the prejudice of their plighted word and to the disgrace of their royal diadems." Though many Spaniards were then present in Italy and were usually eager to accept such exciting opportunities for fame, not one of them came forward. The truth of Scipioni's challenge and the justice of his cause were universally admitted.

For many people the incredible thing was that a man as

astute as Cesare Borgia should have taken the word of Ferdinand the Catholic, who never regarded a promise as of the slightest consequence when affairs of State were concerned. One may only say that the old master had at last turned his trick on his terrible disciple. Claudio could remember many instances of the double-faced diplomacy of this Spanish monarch, so great in his way. On one occasion a French ambassador saw fit to chide him for his lack of sincerity in dealing with Louis the Twelfth.

"My master," said the Ambassador, "will have no further dealings with Spain. He remembers that Your Highness deceived him once."

"Once!" cried Ferdinand, smiling good-naturedly, "I have fooled him eight times at least!"

The galley reached Valencia toward the end of September in the year 1504 and, for the first time in his life, Cesare Borgia, a son of Spain, set foot on Spanish soil. At the age of fifteen he had been named Archbishop of Valencia. He was now visiting his one time diocese as a prisoner. At the age of eight he had begun his career in the Church by assuming the mitre of Pampelune. He was destined to die, near by, in the Kingdom of Navarre. The land of his fathers, which had been hearing the echoes of his grandeur for so many years, was to know him only in defeat and in death.

Since the Borgias had many friends and relatives in the Kingdom of Valencia, Ferdinand would not permit the Duke to remain in that capital, but sent him on to the poorly equipped and uncomfortable Castle of Chinchilla in the neighborhood of Albacete. There Cesare passed several months in such dejection of spirit that, in connivance, doubtless, with partisans in Valencia, he made a rash and incredibly hazardous attempt to escape. The chatelain of the castle, Gabriel Guzman by name, was noted for his strength and his skill as a wrestler; but one day, when he had climbed the high tower with Cesare to show him the view, Cesare attacked him suddenly and tried to throw him from the battlements, perhaps with the idea of escaping afterwards. The struggle was long and bitter, the two men proving equally matched in

strength. At last, Guzman mastered his prisoner, who explained, laughing, that it had been just a joke on his part, to see whether the chatelain really had the strength for which he was famous.

Shortly afterwards, the Duke was transferred to the Castle at La Mota, near Medina del Campo in Central Castile, where his family could count no friends. It was at Medina no less that Isabel had died on the twenty-sixth of November, 1504.

That event brought Castile to the verge of civil war. One party in the nobility thought that Ferdinand should continue ruling the Kingdom in the name of his daughter Joan (later called the Mad); a larger faction, eager for a change, thought the Crown should pass without any regency to Joan and her husband, Philip the Fair, son of Maximilian, Emperor of Germany. This strange situation turned to the advantage of the captive at Medina del Campo. Lucretia Borgia from her court at Ferrara, the Spanish Cardinals at Rome, and King John of Navarre acting in the interests of Charlotte d'Albret, his sister and Cesare's wife, made a common effort to procure the release of Duke Valentino. Julius the Second refused to support the petition. At his instigation, indeed, the widow of Giovanni Borgia, Duke of Gandia, begged Ferdinand to bring Cesare to trial on the charge of murdering her husband, and also her brother-in-law, the Duke of Bisceglia. Since the widowed duchess belonged to Ferdinand's family, many people believed that the prosecution was devised by the King as a pretext for disregarding the requests from abroad for the Duke's release.

However, the two parties had meantime organized in Castile, the one headed by the Duke of Alba, supporting the claims of Ferdinand; the other headed by the Count of Benavente, who was favoring the claims of Philip the Fair and the latter's wife, Joan. Both these groups chanced to turn their eyes upon the lonely captive at Medina. At one moment Ferdinand was afraid that Gonzalo de Cordova might be trying to betray him, and take possession of the throne of Naples on his own account. His knowledge of events in Italy inclined him to think that the Duke of the Romagnas might be the one man able to give the Grand

Captain a thrashing. At almost the same time, the supporters of Philip and Joan thought of rescuing Cesare Borgia and making him their general, in case civil war should break out. In any event, this revived interest in the son of Alexander the Sixth caused him to be watched more closely than ever in his prison.

However, the Count of Benavente managed to establish secret contact with him through the chaplain who attended him, with the result that one of the boldest and most hazardous escapes known to history was successfully executed. Claudio well remembered the great height of the so-called "Tower of Homage" on the Castle of La Mota. The confessor supplied Cesare with a long rope, which, long as it was, proved to be too short, and did not come within yards of the ground. Borgia had only one servant at the time, a Spaniard who had been assigned to him a few months before; but faithful unto death, through the fascination which the Duke exerted upon all his close associates, the man offered to be the first to try the rope. He reached the lower end, and then let himself drop. He broke both his legs and lay on the ground, unable to move, until guards came out from the castle and put him to death. Cesare began to descend the rope, his arms and hands wrapped in cloths to prevent burning; but the distance was so great that they were soon worn through and the rope cut deep into his flesh. At the end he hesitated. There on the ground lay his servant with his legs broken; the sentinels had given the alarm and the chatelain was already on top of the tower. The fugitive's uncertainty would have been short in any event; but the chatelain suddenly cut the rope with the idea that Cesare should fall and be killed. Cesare struck the ground. Half stunned, half maimed, he managed to creep to the moat, throw himself into the water, swim to the other side, and climb the bank. There three crossbowmen of the Count of Benavente were awaiting him. They lifted him upon a horse and galloped away to Villalon, a stronghold belonging to their Lord.

The Duke lay a month in this new hiding place, in order to recover from his injuries. He had escaped on the twenty-fifth of October in the year 1506. He stole secretly from Villalon at

the end of November, his arms and his hands still bandaged. He was accompanied by two men familiar with the country. The three pretended that they were merchants travelling from fair to fair. They made their way to Santander and thence went on by sea to Laredo and Bermeo. There, they began tramping again, proceeding by way of Bilbao, Durango, Mondragon and Vergara, to Pampelune, whither they arrived on December third. The Duke's energy and resourcefulness revealed themselves at their best throughout this perilous journey. The authorities everywhere had been advised of his escape and heavy rewards were posted for his capture. The fictitious merchants were actually arrested in two villages; but the leader of the party was so cool and talked so cleverly that they were immediately released. The one sad detail of this romantic flight was the identifications picked up by the pursuers of Cesare Borgia as they followed his trail. Those who remembered the three merchants reported one of them, especially, as a "man with an ugly face with dark blotches on the skin, the nostrils of the nose widely distended." Such the blonde Cæsar! Such the Prince Beautiful, so much admired of yore by the gay ladies of Roman society!

Safe at last at the court of his brother-in-law, King John of Navarre, Duke Valentino was free to turn his mind to his embroiled affairs. He requested Louis the Twelfth of France to hand over the dowry of his wife, Charlotte d'Albret, which had never been paid, and also the income due from the Duchy of Valence. This petition was disregarded. France was again allied with Ferdinand the Catholic, and Cesare could not secure his money unless he followed the policies of the King of Spain. By virtue of his relationship to the King of Navarre, not to mention his escape from Medina del Campo, he had to be counted among the friends of Philip the Fair and the Emperor Maximilian. In view of this, indeed, now that he had been reminded of the matter, the French King cancelled the Duke's titles and confiscated the domain at Valence. Breaking off relations with Louis of France, Cesare now became commander of the troops of his brother-in-law; and, disregarding the terrible odds against him

in dealing with two great powers such as France and Spain, he took the field against them in the name of Navarre and in behalf of the claims of Philip the Fair to the throne of Spain.

However, his first task was to settle an insignificant war that was in progress between the King of Navarre and a rebel vassal of the latter, Louis de Beaumont, Count of Lerin, an agent of Ferdinand the Catholic. The great Captain who had essayed the unification of Italy was to perish in this ridiculous campaign! On the eleventh of February in the year 1507, Cesare Borgia attacked the fortress of Viane in the neighborhood of Logroño. With the forces at his disposal Cesare would have had no difficulty in taking possession of the town. As it happened, the defenders were hard put for provisions and each night small parties of soldiers tried to make their way through the lines of the besiegers in an effort somehow to get food to the beleaguered garrison. Frequent skirmishes resulted from these operations in the dark.

Just before dawn that morning Cesare Borgia had word that a party of the enemy were attempting one of their sorties. He made ready for battle at once and in his hurry was not careful to adjust his armor properly. His presence was in no way called for. Beaumont's soldiers were already in retreat when he came galloping on the field. But in his eagerness for the fray he dashed ahead, without looking around to see how matters lay. He was soon far in advance of his men and indeed had lost them from view. When Beaumont's knights perceived that only one man was pursuing them, they turned, and Cesare soon found himself surrounded. His costly armor aroused the cupidity of his foes. They gathered about him in great numbers and tried to smother him under a rain of blows. Several pieces of his armor were loose, in particular the section under the left arm. In the end, a lance-head found its way through that aperture and inflicted a mortal wound. Cesare fell from his horse and was soon overwhelmed, though he struggled desperately to defend himself on foot. The rich armor he wore and the costly garments under-

neath fell as booty to his assailants, and his dead body was left half naked on the ground.

The Count of Lerin was astonished at the magnificence of the spoil, which he judged one of the finest products of the armorers of Italy. Unable to imagine who such a wealthy antagonist might be, he rode back with his men to the spot where the encounter had occurred. There he found the naked body and, kneeling in tears beside it, a young man who seemed to be a squire. It was Juanito Grasica, who had sailed from Naples in company with his captive lord and had lived in Spain during all the period of Cesare's imprisonment. Grasica had engineered the flight from Medina del Campo. Then he had come on to Navarre to resume his personal service. He had followed his master into the fight that morning, but had been left far behind by the speed of Borgia's charger. At last, he had stumbled on the corpse. Beaumont asked Juanito the name of the man who had been killed.

"Don César de Borja," the squire replied between his sobs. "Duke of the Romagnas and of Valence."

The Count's men were almost frightened at what they had done. Beaumont publicly lamented that such a distinguished gentleman and a knight so famous should have met his end there in a dirty swamp in a factional quarrel of little importance.

The body was removed to Viane and interred there in the Church of Saint Mary under a pretentious monument that mingled the grace of the Renaissance with the flowery nobility of the Spanish Gothic. The design adorning it showed the Kings of the Holy Scriptures weeping at the death of such a hero. A pompous epitaph in Spanish began as follows:

"Here in a little Earth lies one whom all Earth feared, one who held peace and war in his hand."

"But it was written in the book of fate," thought Claudio, "that none of the Borgias should leave an enduring monument to mark their passage over the face of the Earth. Calixtus the Third and Alexander the Sixth were buried in Saint Peter's but were eventually transferred to a Spanish church in Rome. Lucretia

Borgia, the reigning Princess of Ferrara, sleeps today under a simple slab of marble from which the epitaph has been all but lost. This regal tomb of Cesare, which was erected to his memory by the King of Navarre and was often described by Spanish writers during the Sixteenth century, disappeared completely in the course of the Seventeenth."

A certain Bishop of Calahorra, Pedro de Aranda by name, was accused of Judaism in the year 1498 and imprisoned in the Castle of Sant' Angelo, the prosecution being protracted over many years. At the time the man was majordomo of Alexander the Sixth, but the Pope was compelled to proceed against him at the demand of the Spanish Inquisition and of Ferdinand the Catholic, who made much of the fact that a Pope should be offering refuge to a Jew who had fled from justice in Spain. The Bishop was in due course deprived of the ten thousand ducats in gold which he had in his possession, and of another ten thousand which he had deposited with various banks. This money went into the coffers which Cesare Borgia took with him to France on the occasion of his expensive journey to receive his title as Duke of Valence. Aranda died as the result of his sufferings in prison.

Years and years went by. Finally one of his descendants also became Bishop of Calahorra; and he could never visit the church at Viane without scowling at the gorgeous tomb erected to the son of Alexander the Sixth. By that time, furthermore, the legend of the Borgias had become generally established throughout Europe. The Bishop in question took advantage of some repairs that were being made in the church to dismantle the tomb stone by stone and pitch the bones of Cesare Borgia into the street!

So the Arandas had a last word with the Borgias, and a Spanish Jew with the Spanish Inquisition!

CHAPTER VI

"I Have Lost Her Forever"

CLAUDIO BORJA passed several days in the seclusion of his villa, leaving the house, if at all, for short walks about his garden, his weight resting on a cane. During the afternoons his friends would come in and settle in his studio, as though it were a prolongation of the café, and lavish their companionship for long hours upon the man whose wound they secretly envied.

Enciso de las Casas inquired by telephone each day as to Borja's condition, excusing that expeditious manner of expressing his sympathy by press of business between his country and the Vatican. Scrupulously respectful of the rules of polite intercourse, he regarded it as a breach of good manners on his part not to appear in person to inquire for his wounded friend.

However, one day late in the forenoon the diplomat finally appeared in the doorway of Claudio's studio, bursting without more ado into exclamations of delight at the improved appearance of the invalid.

"Who could ever imagine you had had a bullet through your leg! What a recovery! You are a real Borgia, my dear Claudio, worthy in every respect of your ancestors."

Here the diplomat seemed to hesitate for a moment, as though trying to measure the effect certain news he was bringing might have on the convalescent.

"I hope you won't scold me, my dear fellow," he finally began, having made up his mind. "I am a year or two older than you, but perhaps you will think I have acted like a silly child. At any rate, please believe my intentions were of the best! I was frightened when I saw you splashing blood in the garden there!"

Claudio looked at him with a puzzled expression, and Enciso continued apologetically:

"The doctor said your wound was not serious. Nevertheless, I thought it my duty to inform your relatives—that is to say, the only relative of yours I happened to know about. To put the thing just as it was—I sent a long telegram to your uncle, don Baltasar, in Valencia, recounting exactly all that had occurred."

Claudio started in alarm. But the diplomat anticipated him:

"Later on, I sent another telegram assuring him that everything was favorable. But the good Canon must have supposed my second message an after-thought; he stood on the first one and the result is . . . well, exactly: don Baltasar arrived in Rome last night and came to see me early this morning. At this moment he is at the Spanish Embassy in conference with Senator Bustamante."

For a second Borja had difficulty in concealing his annoyance at this Ambassador, so kind, so solicitous, and, on the whole, such a nuisance. But he decided to make the best of it and shrugged his shoulders indifferently. Canon Figueras was in Rome. There would be no dodging him. He would listen patiently to the good cleric's sermon, if indeed don Baltasar could rouse any interest in an episode of modern life which had nothing whatever to do with the ancient documents in which he was always buried. For the rest, Claudio could not doubt the affection of the saintly bookworm. He, Claudio, was perhaps the one contemporary able to touch a chord of emotion in the old man. A duel and a bullet through the thigh must have come like an earthquake upon that tumble-down mansion cut off from the noise of the world in the somnolent *Calle de los Caballeros*. According to Enciso, Figueras must have taken the first train, expecting to find Claudio dying or dead when he got to Rome. Claudio, for his part, suspected that if there had been such great precipitousness, the Eternal City itself had had a great deal to do with it. Imagine a chance to see the "Rooms of the Borgias" again, with the fragments of Manises tiling ordered by Pope Alexander the Sixth!

Enciso promised to come back with Figueras in the course of the afternoon. He had urged the Canon not to torment his

nephew with useless plaints and moral lectures. Would it not be better just to forget the past and all that had happened? Or if one were to think of it, to do so with consolations and remedies in view? The duel and all that led up to it had to be put to the credit of Claudio's scatter-brained youth.

The duel and all that led up to it! Borja acknowledged with a smile the kindly intentions of the diplomat. But how many memories that delicate allusion suddenly brought to life! He stood silent a moment, struggling with a question that insisted on escaping his lips though he might have preferred to repress it:

"And Rosaura?" he asked at last.

It was the diplomat's turn to hesitate.

"Señora de Pineda," he replied after an appreciable pause, "must already be far from Rome. She told me she was leaving early this morning. My dear fellow, what is life but change? And we change ourselves! Sometimes I think of human existence as a sort of wheel. We have the illusion that we are going forward and upward, but a moment later there we are, upside down! Rosaura? . . . Why call her by a romantic name she has ceased to deserve? Think of her as the widow Pineda! And a few days hence, think of her as Señora Lopez Rallo! She is marrying him, marrying him with as much excitement and fuss as though it were her first trip to the altar! What do you think of that? Interesting, good-looking—you know, romantic! . . . . and there she is, thinking of pots and pans and household furnishings like a *bourgeoise* in her 'teens!"

And a real disappointment was written on Enciso's face, as though that much-married diplomat were surfeited with the monotonous comforts of a home, and really regretted to see this exciting lady, who had been for so long the symbol of all that spelled adventure, irregularity and danger in his life, become a matron like any other matron, in fact no better nor worse than Señora de las Casas herself!

"For my part," he resumed, "I cannot imagine what she sees in that fellow with the monocle; and I have difficulty in visualizing

her as the perfect wife thinking only of the children she has, and perhaps of others she is going to have!"

Claudio sat listening with cold indifference, his eyes spying, as it were, on his inner being, to see whether the diplomat's words were arousing in him any echoes of pain. In fact, he could find no trace either of jealousy or anger. They might as well have been talking of another woman, someone different from the woman he had known and loved. Indeed, he almost laughed as he imagined Rosaura in her new rôle as a placid, procreative female . . . one of those "incubators" who had often been the object of their mirth in the garden on the *Côte d'Azur*. He had always thought of Rosaura de Pineda as a great seagull with wings as strong as an eagle's and plumage as white as a dove's, soaring aloft above the blue immensity of the ocean, and viewing the roughest waves as wrinkles on a field of blue. Instead—just a barnyard fowl, content to cluck and scratch with other fowls of the same coop!

"As I take it, my dear Claudio," the diplomat continued, "the cuff you gave that young man in the hotel corridor could not have come in more handy—for the man in the monocle, that is. The incident seems to have aroused Rosaura's real interest in the fellow! You know, women always think of the men they love as heroes. Had Rallo got the bullet, instead of you, she would have lavished her tenderest care on him and wept over his misfortune; but since you proved to be the one to get hurt, she looks upon him as a conqueror! Just so . . . going and coming! At any rate, she loves him more than before the duel!"

These allusions to his own defeat and to Rosaura's higher opinion of his antagonist were a bitter pill for Borja. His discomfort must have shown itself on his face. The diplomat hastened to add:

"I don't say that she is happy or proud at what has occurred. On the contrary, she is inclined to be uneasy. She is afraid you will make trouble with Lopez Rallo again. She says she knows you through and through. She is sure you will follow them and

try to break up their happiness. Yes, that was her word—happiness! I heard it from her own lips!"

Then smiling with inward pleasure at thought of such an exciting visit, Enciso went on to recount the request he had received from Señora de Pineda that he call at her hotel. During the conversation, she had told him of her plans for the future as wife of the young attaché.

"You will understand," he cautioned. "She had no particular interest in telling such things to me. What she really wanted was that I accompany her here and be present during her talk with you. She wanted to ask you in the name of your old friendship to leave her alone, dismiss her from your thoughts, forget her. She wants you to accept the facts as they are, just as she accepted certain facts on a day gone by. 'It was a dream, my dear Enciso,' she said, 'but it was only a dream. Don't we all dream?' Those were her words!"

Claudio nodded without speaking. The words Rosaura had whispered to him during their talk at the hotel!

"You also understand," the diplomat continued, "that I found the suggestion rather embarrassing. Let a woman want something and she thinks it the most logical and natural thing in the world to have it. But imagine me, a respectable married man, an accredited representative to the Pope, arranging a conference between two lovers and acting as witness to their quarrel! Or, in the opposite case, supposing the conversation took a sentimental turn—you know, memories, thoughts of entrancing days gone by . . . you see, not just my rôle as a plenipotentiary to the Vatican! Romance, well and good, but within limits, my dear Claudio, within limits! . . ."

And again Enciso's voice was vibrant with an echo of that good-natured envy, that tranquil wistfulness, which reports of the Argentine widow's sentimental affairs always aroused in him.

"Fortunately," Enciso continued, "she abandoned all thought of the visit when I urged that she come here alone . . . I even gave her your address! She said she would never think of seeing you alone; and I got the impression that she was afraid of what

might happen, that the past might prove more powerful than her will for the future. Flattering, very flattering to you, that, my dear Claudio! But to put the matter in a word: she begged me to use my influence with you that you should cause no further annoyance to her and her future husband. They left Rome this morning, giving no address. I understand perfectly . . . after the duel it was not exactly comfortable for them here! She was keeping to her apartment in the hotel, not even venturing to come down to the dining-room. The episode is still the talk of society. Those who had not met her were anxious to. The women in particular were jealous of her good luck: two boys trying to kill each other for a widow with children! And they are adding a certain number of years to her age to make your encounter look a little more interesting . . . and perhaps ridiculous!"

Twelve o'clock was striking from the bell-towers about the city. Enciso had to hurry away; but before leaving, he thought it best to touch on certain matters of counsel which Borja would certainly hear from his uncle's lips.

"Don Baltasar agrees with the two of us. By the two of us, I mean myself, and my good friend don Aristides. Senator Bustamante is as fond of you as he ever was. He still regrets what took place that evening in my house; but now, after all this time, he is inclined to laugh over it, just as I was that evening. A little off tone, a little out of place, yes; but after all, the caprice of a poet and not such an unattractive one . . . that is what I said to everybody! And things can be arranged, my dear Claudio. In this matter of social conventions . . . well, you have just got to give in to them and drift with the current; or, if you wish, swim out from the current once in a while to satisfy a hankering, provided of course you can do so without scandal. There you have my philosophy! And now you follow our advice! We have your interests at heart!"

When Enciso had gone, Rosaura's image rose again in Claudio's memory as he had seen her a year before on the flowering slopes of the *Venusberg*. For days past she had been but a pallid

phantom with no life of its own which he could evoke in his mind without tremor of emotion. He had her near at hand; he could see her whenever he chose, even repeating the scene in the hotel grill, and interfering in her new love at his own caprice. The sense that he had such a power was a kind of sedative. It left him cool and collected in a resigned calm. But now, as he thought of her far away, a fugitive in company with the inconsequential individual who was selfishly marrying a fortune to make sure of a comfortable living, and as he realized that she was beyond his reach and that he might never know how or where to find her again, she appeared before him like the mediæval Venus emerging before the eyes of the knight Tannhäuser, naked, luminous, white like a cloud made flesh, in the embrace of the great pearly shell on which she was reclining. Not now the barnyard fowl, to which he had contemptuously likened her! Again she was soaring over a great field of blue on the white dovelike wings of Aphrodite, magnificent as an eagle flying on high . . . but alas, alas, flying toward another man!

"I shall never see her again!" he groaned inwardly. "What can bring her back to me?"

Don Baltasar Figueras arrived toward the middle of the afternoon, escorted to the door of Claudio's villa by a footman from the Spanish Embassy. The Canon displayed a laudable self-restraint, evincing an almost childish curiosity in the wounded thigh, asking to see the bandages and to touch them with his fingers, and interrupting Claudio's narrative of the duel with questions as to certain incidental and quite unessential details.

"The crazy things men do!"

But one could see that a deal of pride lurked in the exclamation, as he considered that a member of his family had carelessly risked his life in mortal combat, like one of those gentlemen of centuries gone by who went from tourney to tourney about the realm of Aragon, displaying a *mosén,* before their names. To the woman whom he had met on the *Côte d'Azur* and who had been the unwitting cause of this recent dramatic episode, he made

no direct allusion. It was a scruple of the cloth with him to avoid immoral subjects in conversation!

"Well," he finally concluded in a sharp tone that made no impression whatever on his scapegrace nephew, "perhaps after all this nonsense you have been up to, you will be ready to settle down. The real trouble with you is the kind of life you have been leading—no family, no wife, no home! We were talking of that very thing this morning, don Aristides and I. He is very much pained, as he has a right to be, with all that has been going on. But he is fond of you and so is that poor little angel of a Stella; and I say nothing about the aunt, though she can have a mean disposition when she sets out to, good kind soul as she is at bottom. Well, they forgive you and they are waiting to take you back. Now don't say no! I didn't come all the way from Spain for nothing! You are going to go there and call on them with me! There will be no talking about things that are past and gone—I'll be there to help you, you see! And you'll go back and live with your old guardian just as you did before you met that lady. Things have to be the way they ought to be. Don Aristides has lots of influence at the Vatican. He can arrange your marriage in no time, cutting all the red tape. But I tell you one thing, I am not going away from here until I see you married to that little girl!"

And the good old soul of a Canon thought that that was the end of it.

The following morning Borja left his house for the first time to meet an appointment with the Canon in a little hotel on the *Via del Governo Vecchio,* much patronized by clerics because of its proximity to the Vatican, and which Figueras always used as headquarters during his visits in Rome.

The Canon's first words, as he appeared in the lobby, were to inform Claudio that they were expected for luncheon at the Spanish Embassy at one o'clock. It would be better, however, to go a little early, that good relations might be re-established more at leisure between Claudio and the members of the Senator's family.

"It is ten o'clock now," said the Canon. "Suppose we start about twelve when we hear the shot on the Castle of Sant' Angelo? Meantime we can just step around to the Vatican and look in on the 'Rooms of the Borgias' with all those paintings by Pinturicchio."

His nephew's affairs settled to everybody's satisfaction, the Canon had plunged back into the past again, excited by the historic atmosphere that hangs over Rome. As they crossed the Bridge of Sant' Angelo and turned into the straight, narrow by-ways of the Leonine City, don Baltasar began again protesting against the treatment of the "worst slandered people in history."

"As for Lucretia, they have been giving her her deserts at last. The Protestant Gregorovius, along with other historians, has shown that this young lady, who died in childbirth at the age of thirty-nine, was never the sensual wench nor the diabolical poisoner whom the enemies of her family invented, and whom certain poets of modern times have painted blacker still to serve the purposes of literature. In her younger days Lucretia was known as the best dressed woman in Europe and the lady of most perfect taste and distinction of manner. As Princess of Ferrara she withdrew from worldly vanities, put aside jewels and frivolities, and turned to a life of piety and charity, founding monasteries and hospitals, without, for that matter, neglecting the care and education of her children nor the duties incumbent on the princess of a reigning house. She died in the year 1519, a serene, resigned Christian death, the death of a good mother. The evening before, she had written a letter in her own hand to Pope Leo the Tenth, with whom she was in frequent correspondence. The letters reveal that for ten years past she had worn a coarse garment of sackcloth under her costly outer garments, and that for two years she had made confession every day, and communed weekly. Ferrara went into mourning at her death and Alfonso d'Este, her husband, a hardy soldier who was fain to add the word 'bombardier' under his signature as the proudest of his titles, never forgot her in the fifteen years he was still to live."

Claudio was taking little interest in his uncle's historical reminiscences, but the priest seemed to disregard his lack of attention.

"The last of the Borgia family to disappear," he continued, "was don Geoffrey, Prince of Squillace. That young man, whom Cesare was inclined to despise as 'an individual of little,' weak of body and shrunken of mind, must have felt some relief at finding himself a widower. His wife, the inflammable doña Sancha, died in the year 1506, three years after Cesare had released her from the Castle of Sant' Angelo and packed her off to Naples. She did not live to complete her twenty-seventh year. Despite the reputation she left, I have read opinions of Spanish contemporaries that doña Sancha was 'an accomplished lady and a great princess, loyal withal to Spain.' However that may be, Geoffrey Borgia, finding himself alone at the age of twenty-three, left Italy for Spain, where he married a daughter of the Count of Albaída and lived the rest of his life in the obscure and humble happiness of those who have no history."

Claudio issued from his abstraction to ask a question that had occurred to him many times.

"What became of don Michelotto?" he asked. "No one ever speaks of him after Cesare's death, nor even during Valentino's last years, when he was a prisoner in Spain."

The Canon smiled, making a gesture of feigned terror.

"Micalet Corella? What a man! But you are right! Nothing seems to be known about the end of his terrible life. Cesare left Italy without being able to see him again. After defending the conquests of his lord and friend for a long time, barking and snarling like an angry bulldog, don Michelotto fell into the hands of the Florentines along with other partisans of the Borgias. The new Pope, Julius the Second, procured his extradition to Rome and locked him up in the Castle of Sant' Angelo. There the man was frequently tortured in hopes that he might reveal something about Cesare's crimes. His evidence was considered essential to the terrible prosecution the Pope was intending to bring against the Duke of the Romagnas; but don Michelotto absorbed

untold sufferings without once breaking silence, and kept faith with his protector to the end. Doubtless he was questioned about many crimes which Borgia had never committed—he was credited with so many things, as though the crimes he actually committed were not enough! But never a word about don Michelotto, after his imprisonment in the Castle in Rome! Night falls upon his name. Perhaps he died from the effects of the torture. It is equally possible that he recovered his freedom and was killed in some ambuscade. Now that he was without the help of the dread comrades in adventure whom he had been compelled to disband, Michelotto had no lack of enemies to provide him with such an end. On the other hand, it may well be that he managed to get back to Spain, and passed the rest of his life with his brother, the Marquis of Cocentaina—that Corella of legitimate birth who saved Pope Alexander from the lion in the *Belvedere* of the Vatican. It would not be surprising to learn that he ended his life in our country as a respectable *hidalgo* devoted to religion, passing his days in the village church and telling the history of his adventures to his brother's children!"

This one curiosity satisfied, Borja relapsed into indifference toward what his uncle was saying. As they threaded the narrow streets beyond the Tiber, they kept passing crowds of tourists who were returning from visits to the Church of Saint Peter, Americans, for the most part, members probably of some pilgrimage. Some of them, Borja could not have told why, reminded him of the woman uppermost in his thoughts. None of these American girls had much, in physical appearance, to remind him of the beautiful Argentinian. They were blondes, while Rosaura de Pineda was a flashing brunette. The resemblance came perhaps in their manner, their stride, a certain air of gymnastic self-possession, their careful dressing, their health, wealth, joy in life. Yes, Rosaura was a traveller as they were, a woman one might think of always in connection with hotels, express trains, trans-Atlantic liners. The presence of such women on those streets of Rome would ordinarily have made no impres-

sion on him. At this moment they touched a chord of strident anguish in his heart.

"I shall never see her again! I have lost her forever!"

But the Canon Figueras was continuing his monologue.

"If we are beginning to see a Lucretia entirely different from the monster invented by the fancy of the past, we are also beginning to think differently of Alexander the Sixth. I am a man of the Church and it would be unseemly in me to talk against our Popes; but in all reverence to the See of Saint Peter's I am able to distinguish between men as men and the pontifical functions they exercise. And I must say that Giuliano della Rovere, Pope Julius the Second, in other words, behaved like a rascal in slandering his predecessor and in according his blessing to anyone who saw fit to write against the Borgias. Rovere's private life was no whit better than Alexander's; indeed, he was guilty of vices unknown to the Spanish Pope. But when the Protestant Reform came on, writers in the North needed some Pope or other to incarnate all the vices and crimes of the Roman Curia through the centuries. Julius the Second handed over to them ready-made a whole Borgia legend of recent devising.

"One of Rodrigo Borgia's great defects was to take lightly the tales invented to his discredit. 'Let them talk,' he used to say. 'Leave the Romans free to insult you, and you can govern them as you please.' For another thing, the Borgias were Spaniards coming from the country which upheld the religious unity of the world with its sword. What more could have been necessary? There was a scapegoat ready for anyone who wished to attack the Papacy; and for three centuries, almost down to our own time, historians have copied one another's lies without taking the trouble to go back to the original sources. Even the Spaniards, influenced by foreign writers, have all along accepted the slanderous legend; whereas Alexander was a great Pope and even Cesare, his son, the worst member of the family, was not more blameworthy than any other prince of his time. If he was different from them at all, it was in his greater talent, his greater

energy and activity. Many of the crimes attributed to him are unworthy of his intelligence and character."

At this point the Canon's face lighted up with a smile of pitying irony:

"And all that poison of the Borgias! You know how poison was made in those days—an absurd invention, if indeed it be true, worthy of the medicine and the pharmacy of the time. A hog would be fed on food saturated with arsenic and then beaten to death with clubs; and the fluids that came from the bruised body would be caught and preserved to be used as required. It is true that arsenic produces symptoms in its victims, but far less spectacular ones than those attributed to the poison of the Borgias. Whenever any man of importance died, his body covered with rash or abcesses, it would generally be noised abroad that he had been poisoned by the Borgias. As though people never died from any other cause! As though diseases were not in existence at that time! Not only had the 'French disease' recently made its appearance in Europe and sped from one country to another without respecting Popes and kings! Little was known about the true nature of diabetes, and we must bear in mind the régime of continuous banqueting, with all kinds of drinks and sweetmeats, to which the barons and prelates of that day were accustomed. But the moment someone fell ill at a ceremonial and died with marks of any kind on his body, the 'poison of the Borgias' was called into play—it was working its way out through the skin! And the only remedy the doctors of that time could think of was to drink hot snake-broth and apply cats, dogs, and chickens, which had been gutted alive, to the body of the patient! To be sure, poisoning was then a weapon used to some extent by all heads of governments. Most of the reigning princes employed alchemists to hunt for new drugs. But the concern of Alexander and his son, Cesare, was less to poison other people than to keep from being poisoned themselves!"

They had reached the square in front of Saint Peter's, and Figueras as usual burst into admiration for the semi-circular

colonnade and the great cupola of the Basilica. In the eyes of the Spanish priest the whole majestic monument was a symbol of the universality of his beliefs. But then, associating the architectural splendor before him with the Pontiff whom he called "my Pope," he said:

"I can never stand here without thinking of Rodrigo Borgia. I know that this edifice was reared after his death; but no one can deny that it was during his pontificate that Catholicism reached its greatest splendor. After the first centuries of triumphant Christianity the Roman Catholic faith lost membership instead of gaining it. First the Greeks left us and carried away one part of Europe. Shortly after Pope Borgia's death his immediate successors lost another large section through the rebellion of the peoples affected by the Reform. Catholicism, as we see it today, began its growth under the great Spanish Pope. In saying that, I have the discovery of America in mind. It was Alexander who divided the world between the Spaniards and the Portuguese. Columbus wrote to him in Spanish (in spite of the fact that Rodrigo Borgia had lived three-quarters of his life in Italy), and reported the exploration of 'twelve hundred miles of Asiatic shore,' the discovery of 'Japan' and large numbers of islands adjoining. Twenty American nations beyond that Ocean are now Catholic by virtue of having been born to Christian life at the time of Alexander the Sixth! More than a hundred million people in the Western Hemisphere look to Rome because of Pope Borgia's proselyting spirit. He sent missionaries to America as early as the Second Voyage of Discovery. We may well understand the Pontiff's pride. Would we not have fallen into the same sin ourselves? The Spaniards had realized the miracle of reaching Asia by the route West (few suspected at that moment that a new world had been found); and the Pope, who happened to be in office to give his blessing to such an astonishing feat, was also a Spaniard. A believer such as Alexander the Sixth must have seen the hand of Providence in such coincidences!"

Claudio was not listening. His mind was working on the visit he would be paying within an hour to don Aristides and the

latter's family. Yes, he would have to follow his destiny! A mocking voice seemed to be calling from a distance in the depths of his soul: "Farewell, Knight Tannhäuser!" Yes, the playtime of his life must come to an end! He must content himself with a quiet, monotonous, pleasantly humdrum existence without mad joys, without disturbing conflicts! He would be Stella Bustamante's husband; and that same mocking voice seemed to cry in distant lament: "Poor Stella!"

They had reached the portal of the Vatican and the Valencian priest resumed in a certain formal tone, as though he were addressing a congregation of different race and faith:

"Those who do not belong to our religion must regard the pontificate of Alexander the Sixth as a great episode in history, perhaps the most important in the experience of our race. What were the whites of Europe after all? Just a minority of humanity huddling on a continent too strait for them! Who can say whether, if the whites had not found some outlet, if they had expended their energies in constant struggle for the ownership of an inadequate soil, the peoples of Asia, who are like so many swarms of bees or ants, might not have fallen upon us in the end and made us their slaves by dint of superiority in numbers? But we Spaniards discovered the American continents at the time of Pope Borgia; and thanks to us, Europe was able to expand over the longest of the continental masses on the earth's surface; whereby, in the North and in the South, all climates and all kinds of natural wealth were made ready to her hand to be used in the final triumph of the whites over the rest of our planet."

The Canon seemed suddenly to become aware of his nephew's inattention. He halted, turned toward him and, pointing to the magnificent palace that rose before them, exclaimed:

"Can't you imagine how Rodrigo Borgia must have felt, along toward the summer of the year 1493, when he had been Pope just a few months and Pinturicchio was just beginning work on the decorations in what we now call the 'Rooms of the Borgias'? A piece of news began going the rounds of the thousands of Spaniards gathered in Rome to exploit the favor of the Cardinal from their country who had just been elected Pope. One of them,

Lorenzo de Cosco by name, a priest of Aragon, who added the epithets of 'generous' and 'learned' to his many sacred titles, had just translated into Latin, the universal language of the time, a letter written from Lisbon by a man named Columbus and addressed to a converted Jew, his Excellency don Gabriel Sanchez, treasurer to Ferdinand the Catholic. In that letter the sailor told the story of his voyage with a hundred Spaniards and three vessels across the great Ocean to the West. They were looking for the lands of the Grand Khan of Tartary, and those lands they had found by the route westward. To be sure, they had not succeeded in reaching the Grand Khan's capital, the great city of Kalambù, described by Marco Polo and Mandeville.

"The Spanish Pope was thrilled at the news, and hurriedly ordered Cosco's translation of the letter to be printed and despatched to all the sovereigns of the earth. The strange thing was that Alexander the Sixth, who had lived most of his life in Italy, spoke of Columbus as a Spaniard; so did the Italian, Jacopo Trotti, who wrote to his lord, the Duke of Ferrara, about new lands discovered by the 'Spaniard Colón.' There you have another mystery upon which light may quite as well be shed as upon the legend of the Borgias! Don't you think so, Claudio?"

Claudio said nothing. He may not even have heard. The priest went on:

"Pope Borgia was the first [illegible] More to announce the discovery of America to the world in a [illegible]ere [illegible]er that may be called official. To be sure, it was not yet called America, nor was the true character of the discovery yet perceived by anyone. But don't you think that is interesting, as we stand just here about to enter the famous 'Rooms of the Borgias'?"

And he seized Claudio by the lapels of his coat and gazed into his face as he asked the question.

The young man had not heard a word of what the Canon had been saying. But he nodded assent. An anguished lament was ringing in his soul. Had he spoken, it would have been only to utter it:

"She has gone forever! I shall never see her again!"

THE END.